Captive Heart

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by muse_apollo

Summary

When Jack Crawford first pulled Will out of the classroom and begged him for help, it had been on the tip of Will's tongue to tell him exactly where he could stick it. He'd been through this before, had his mind hauled over broken glass time and time again by Jack Crawford for the sake of saving lives. Then Jack had mentioned the Ripper and Will had stopped dead in his tracks. The Chesapeake Ripper wasn't some run-of-the-mill psycho, he was among the worst Will had seen in his lifetime.

If he could help to stop a man like that - even at the price of his own sanity- then Will would do it.

So, naturally, he'd said yes. What else could he do?

Or- the one where Will Graham manages to catch the Chesapeake Ripper, only to realize that it was the Chesapeake Ripper who meant to catch him the whole time.

Chapter 1

Will woke in utter darkness, panting, sweat-soaked, sitting in a cold metal chair. He tried to move, but found that he was restrained. He thrashed then, struggling to break free, yanking roughly at the cuffs until the metal bit sharply into his wrists; not hard enough to break skin, but certainly hard enough to leave bruises. He wanted to yell; almost did, but then thought better of it. Instead he sat in silence, breathing deep, closing his eyes -though it made no difference in the blackness of the room- and concentrating. The last thing he remembered was investigating a suspect on the ripper case, a man named Hannibal Lecter, former surgeon and accomplished psychiatrist. He certainly fit the profile.

Lecter had invited Will into his office with a slight quirk of his lips which was almost -though not quite- a smile. He'd looked relatively harmless, dressed impeccably if eccentrically, in a blue plaid suit and paisley tie, with greying blonde hair which had been styled neatly back from a rather severe face.

"What did you say your name was?" The man had spoke in a voice like velvet.

"Special Agent Will Graham."

Dr. Lecter tilted his head to one side. "Ah yes," he said after a moment, "I've heard of you."

Will scoffed, with his luck the only things this man knew of him were through TattleCrime.com. "Good things, I hope."

"Predominantly." Hannibal replied. "Though I have learned it is best not to base one's opinions on what one hears, but rather on experience."

Will chuckled at that. "That's a good philosophy, Doctor Lecter."

"Would you like a drink, Mr. Graham?"

"Will's fine." Will said, because he found he hated most forms of formal address. "And I'm not really one for drinking on the job."

"That's commendable." Lecter smiled, it was a warmer, friendlier thing now. "Perhaps some other time."

Will was more than a little taken aback by the remark, he ducked his head slightly. "I'm really not great company."

"So, what can I do for you, Will?" Hannibal asked, clearly recognizing the professional purpose of the visit.

"I needed to ask you a few questions about a former patient of yours, back when you were a surgeon at Baltimore General."

“Of course.” Hannibal's lips twitched just slightly, a hardening of his jaw and the lines around his eyes, barely noticeable, but still Will saw it, and something like dread pooled in his gut.

He told Lecter the name of the patient, and the man frowned for a long moment.

“It doesn’t seem to sit in my memory, but I’ve always been quite terrible with names.” He said finally.

“It would have been while you were working in the emergency ward.” Will encouraged. “The circumstances of the man’s injury were quite memorable, an arrow wound in his leg.”

Lecter shook his head. “No, I’m sorry, I have no memory of such a man.” He paused. “Though it’s been quite some time since I retired from surgery.”

“You wouldn’t happen to have any records from that time, would you?” Will arched an eyebrow.

“I might.” Hannibal placed his glass down on the table. “Give me a moment to go check.”

“Of course.” Will said, his eyes following Lecter’s movements as he disappeared into a room off the back of his office.

Will took the opportunity to have an unmonitored look around Lecter’s office. He approached the shelves, examining the books there. There wasn’t anything particularly interesting; mostly old medical texts. Still it triggered something in Will’s mind, and he frowned deeply.

He reached out, pulling a title from the shelf at random, flipping it open. As he did, a loose paper fell from between its pages. Will reached down and picked it up from where it had landed facedown on the floor. He flipped it over; it was a pencil sketch, a recreation of an image Will had seen in the past; a man laid out on a table, various weapons stabbed into various parts of his flesh. It was the wound man, a familiar image from a number of older medical texts... as well as the pose of the Chesapeake Ripper’s latest victim.

Will’s brow furrowed as he stared at the drawing in his hands, it was disturbing to say the least, but the most unsettling aspect of the piece was the man’s face, wild-eyed and terrified, his mouth twisted in a cry of agony.

The artist had intended for the man to look alive; had intended to capture his suffering.

Will didn’t hear Lecter come up behind him, he moved silent as any predator, and equally as deadly. He felt the man’s breath on his neck for a moment, and then he felt the needle pierce his skin, and then the world fell away around him.

He opened his eyes again as he shook off the memory, it didn’t help much; he was alone in the dark, heart beating so fast that he thought it just might give out. He sat there for a long time, desperately trying to slow his breathing; to still the violent shaking of his shoulders as he waited for his captor to return. Crime scene after crime scene played through his mind; all of the Ripper’s finest, and he wondered then just what sort of artwork he’d end up as… Just which organs of his would be kept as trophies.

The door swung open, and a man loomed up before him, silhouetted black against the bright light streaming in from outside.

Will shuddered, struggling as the man approached him. He'd been in the dark too long, it seemed, and the light hurt his eyes. "Are you going to kill me?" He asked, rather stupidly, because of course he was going to kill him; Will Graham was going to die a horrible death at the hands of the man he'd spent the last six months getting inside the head of.

And he could blame Jack Crawford for that.

The man was silent for a long time. "No, Will," he said finally. Then a hand gripped his upper arm, and he felt a needle pierce his skin, something cold flooding his veins, turning him heavy. "I'm not going to kill you." And that was the last thing he heard before he blacked out again.

*****

When Jack Crawford first pulled Will out of the classroom and begged him for help, it had been on the tip of Will's tongue to tell him exactly where he could stick it. He'd been through this before, had his mind hauled over broken glass time and time again by Jack Crawford, all in the name of saving lives. Then Jack had mentioned the Ripper and Will had stopped dead in his tracks. The Chesapeake Ripper wasn't some run-of-the-mill psycho, he was among the worst Will had seen in his lifetime.

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When Will woke next he was in a bed; not just any bed either, it was perhaps among the most comfortable beds he'd ever lied in, a mattress he felt he could sink into, a thick blanket wrapped around him. He shifted, and his cheek rubbed against the pillow case. *Silk* . He frowned and opened his eyes.

The bedroom he was in was lavishly decorated and entirely unfamiliar; filled with antiques that Will was almost certain cost more than his entire home. He sat up and looked around. Aside from his own presence the room seemed entirely undisturbed, unlived in even. There were no pictures on the nightstand, no glasses left astray, nothing to indicate that a person actually slept here on a regular basis. A guest bedroom then.

He stood, trying to get bearings on his surroundings, and stumbled for a moment, grabbing the bedside table in order to stabilize himself. His head felt too heavy for his shoulders and the room kept spinning around him faster than he could catch up. He thought for a moment that he might vomit.

The door opened, and Will looked up. There was Hannibal Lecter, dressed in a different plaid suit and paisley tie than he had worn when last Will saw him, a silver serving tray in his hands. He shut the door behind him, eyeing Will passively.

“I would not attempt to stand if I were you.” He said slowly. “The drugs I gave you will still be in your system.”

“You-” Will attempted to lunge at him, but couldn’t keep his balance once he’d released his grip on the table. The floor seemed to rise up to meet him, slamming hard against his hands and knees. He was thankful for the rather extravagantly patterned rug which served to soften the impact.

Hannibal approached, standing over him for a long moment. Then he sighed and put down the tray he was carrying on the bedside table, offering Will a hand. Will eyed the hand, then glared up at Hannibal; trying -and failing- to pull himself to stand on his own. Hannibal’s top lip twitched lightly in distaste, and he grabbed Will’s collar, yanking him roughly to his feet. Will tried to struggle, but he was still too weak and tired to put up much of a fight.

“I was attempting to be polite.” Hannibal growled as he pushed Will back so that he was sitting on the bed. “But you seemed determined to do everything the more difficult way.”

“Fuck you!”

“I would appreciate if you didn’t swear in my home.” Hannibal replied smoothly, but there was an undertone of threat to the words.

“Your *home* ?” Will raised an eyebrow.

“Well, I had to put you somewhere.” Hannibal shrugged. “I couldn’t have you running off to tell the FBI what you had learned.” He made it sound simple, logical. It wasn't, Will thought, and yet it was, really it all made perfect sense except for one detail...

“Why am I still alive?”

“As I said before, I have heard of you, Will Graham.” A pause. “Though I’ve heard quite a bit more than I let on, I must admit.”

“How much more?”

“Enough to know that it would be a waste of a brilliant mind to kill you.”

“So instead what? You’re just gonna keep me here?”

“Yes.”

“And you don’t think I’ll try to escape?”

A pause, and a sly, half-smile. “You may try. The window is bolted shut, all of my doors have inner locks as well as outer ones, and there is only one key, which I have in my possession.” He paused. “That includes the door to this room.”

Leave it to a serial killer to have his house decked out like a prison . It was then that he noticed what was on the tray Hannibal had brought him. “Did you…” He trailed off, furrowing his brow. “Did you make me breakfast?”

“Of course. It would be counterproductive to starve you.”

Will eyed the sausage and eggs, the piping hot mug of coffee beside it; it really did look quite good. Bile rose in his throat, however, when he thought of the Ripper’s surgical trophies. “And who is it I would be eating, exactly?”

Hannibal smiled then, seemingly impressed with Will for having come to that realization on his own. “Trust me, the world's better off without him.”

Will glared at him, but pulled the tray into his lap anyway. He merely wouldn’t eat the sausage. He glanced back up at Hannibal, narrowing his eyes. “Don’t you have someone to dismember? Or are you just going to stand there and watch me eat?”

Hannibal said nothing to this. “After you finish your breakfast, take a shower. There is soap and towels in the ensuite.”

“Pardon me?”

“You sweat quite a lot in your sleep. That, combined with that horrid aftershave you’re wearing has created a rather unpleasant odour.” He shrugged. “I had considered bathing you myself while you were unconscious, but worried you would have found it invasive.”

Will had no idea what to say to that, just gaped.

“Enjoy your breakfast.” Hannibal said, and then turned on one heel and walked out the door.

*****

Jack sighed and checked his watch. It was ten o’clock. Will was supposed to have met him an hour ago. He’d called him three times, and all three times Will’s phone had gone straight to the machine. It was worrying to say the least. Only yesterday Will had told him he’d found a new lead on the Ripper, Jack couldn’t help but wonder if he’d done something stupid, like going after him on his own.

He came to a decision in that moment, stood up, got in his car, and started driving to Will’s house. In all likelihood the other man had just overslept. Jack just wanted to make sure.

*****

Will had to admit that the eggs were actually quite good, serial killer or no, Hannibal Lecter was an excellent cook. He didn't try the sausage though, instead choosing to deposit them in the garbage can in the bathroom, discreetly tucked away under a wad of tissues. He felt a bit like a kid again, slipping unwanted vegetables to the dog under the table, but it hardly mattered. He wasn't going to eat what he was almost certain was human flesh.

The shower had some of the best water pressure Will had ever experienced, and the soaps were the fancy sort that smelled of bergamot and whatever else people paid $200 a bottle for. Hannibal Lecter, Will was beginning to determine, had a definite taste for luxury. It didn't surprise him, a man who saw people as objects was bound to be materialistic in some way or another.

He stood under the water for a long time, leaning his head against the wall and just *breathing*. It was difficult, in this instant, for him to come to terms with his situation. He wondered if what he was experiencing was something akin to shock. It certainly felt that way. He only prayed that the FBI would find him soon enough, before the situation escalated, which he was almost certain it would.

Will stepped out of the shower and wiped a hand across the mirror, staring for a long moment at the smudged reflection of himself. He looked like shit. He felt worse. He had no idea the extent of the mess he'd gotten himself into; no way out. Here he was, smelling of luxury and at the absolute mercy of the Chesapeake Ripper himself. He shuddered at the thought, then started to dry himself. When he turned, he found that his clothes were not where he'd left them, instead there was new, clean set; a white button-up and a pair of charcoal slacks. He wondered a number of things, the first being how Hannibal had managed to get in and out of the room without Will noticing, the second being how he had known his size. He dressed quickly, still uneasy, unable to ignore the feeling that he was being treated like a pet. He wondered if that was what Hannibal saw him as. He still couldn't understand the other man's reasoning behind keeping him alive, but he supposed he should be thankful he still had all of his organs.

He stepped out of the bathroom to find the spare bedroom -thankfully- empty. He deposited his glasses neatly on the nightstand. The clock on the wall read eleven-thirty. He was supposed to meet with Jack two-and-a-half hours ago. Surely they'd know he was missing by now. Still, Will found little comfort in this, they would have no idea what had happened to him, nor where to start looking.

He sighed, burying his head in his hands. The door opened again a moment later, and Will frowned, not looking up for a long moment as he fumbled to put on his glasses.

When he did look up, he found that Hannibal wasn't holding a tray of food at all. Hannibal was standing in the doorway, staring at him with an indeterminable look in his eye, something almost hungry.

Will stood, he felt less vulnerable that way. “Do I smell better now?” He said sarcastically.

He didn’t expect the other man to come towards him, walking forwards until Will found that if he stepped back any further, the backs of his knees would hit the bed. He didn’t expect Hannibal to lean forward, bury his face in the side of Will’s neck, and inhale deeply, the gesture made Will think of an animal scenting its prey, made him feel as though Hannibal were three seconds away from sinking his teeth in. Will froze at the proximity, fists clenching at his sides, heart pounding in his chest. Every instinct in his body was telling him either to run as far away as he could, or to clock the other man in the nose. But he could do neither, so he stood stock still and clenched his jaw so hard he thought his teeth might break.

Then, just as quickly as he’d stepped forwards, Hannibal stepped back again, and Will tried not to visibly sag with relief. He must have shown some sign of discomfort because the corners of Hannibal’s mouth twitched slightly.

“You do indeed.” He said, in answer to Will’s earlier question.

“I don’t see why it matters to you how I smell anyway.” Will replied, trying to keep his voice from shaking. Hannibal was still far too close to him.

“I have a very keen nose.” Hannibal replied. “It’s difficult to avoid catching a whiff now and again.”

“What’d you do with my clothes?” Will looked down, fiddling with one of the buttons on his shirt. Hannibal seemed far too determined to meet his eye for Will’s taste.

“They were disposed of accordingly.”

“I liked that sweater.” Will grumbled.

“I didn’t.”

Will was struck by the feeling that a lot of his life was going to center around what Hannibal liked or didn’t like from now on, and he gulped down the lump in his throat.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

> Y'all have been so nice with all your comments and kudos that I decided to post the second chapter early

Lunch and dinner came much in the same way breakfast did, though dinner was accompanied by a glass of wine, which Will thought to be oddly considerate. He treated it the same way he had his previous meals, eating all but the meat, which he ferreted neatly away in the bathroom garbage can. It was certainly helpful that Hannibal mostly left him alone, though Will did wonder if it had something to do with the fact that he was busy covering up the kidnapping he had just committed. *His* kidnapping.

He wondered how long it would be before they found him. He wondered if they *would* find him, and subsequently, he wondered how long it was before Hannibal got bored of him, and what would become of him then.

He hardly slept that night, rolling fitfully on silk sheets, and wondering.

*****

When Jack arrived at Will Graham's home to find him missing, he called the only person he could think to call. After all, Will didn't have many friends.

Alana Bloom answered on the first ring. "Jack. What do you need?"

"Have you heard from Will at all today?" He asked, jumping directly to the point.

Alana must have heard the worry in his voice, because when she spoke next there was something serious in her tone. "No." She said. "Why? Is something wrong?"

"He was supposed to meet me at 9, and he never showed."

"That's a little odd." Alana admitted. "Did you go to his house? It's possible he overslept."

"I'm there now." Jack replied. "There's no one here."

"I'm coming over." Said Alana, and then she hung up.

*****

Will woke -if you could call it that- before the sun. He wasn't sure he'd slept for more than half-an-hour. He was exhausted. He sat up, running a hand across his face, sighing as he did. He shook himself then, and stood, beginning to pace up-and-down the length of the dark room. He didn't bother to turn on a light, hardly saw a point to it.

He wondered how long he could stay in this room before he went mad; it was a small room afterall, and quite a lot of time to spend alone with his thoughts; something which had never been good for Will.

Maybe that was the point of all of this; maybe Hannibal just wanted to see how long it would take for Will to lose his mind.

He leaned his head against the wall. He just needed to ground himself, just needed to think. There was a way out of this. There had to be, he only needed time to find it.

*****

Hannibal appeared at precisely 8:35 with breakfast. Will wondered if he'd waited outside the door for the minute to turn. The notion didn't seem uncharacteristic.

"How did you sleep?" Hannibal asked, setting the tray down on the bedside table.

Will scoffed. "I found it a bit difficult to sleep, given my circumstances." He replied smoothly. "Hard to sleep when you don't feel safe."

"I'm sorry you feel that way." A pause. "Your sleep may improve as you become accustomed to your surroundings."

Will scoffed. "I doubt that."

Hannibal watched him for a long moment, head tilted slightly to the right. "You've eaten all the meals I've brought you. If you thought I was going to kill you, why hadn't you taken poisoning into account?"

Will shook his head. "You wouldn't poison me. It's not… *intimate* enough. And..." He paused.

"And?"

Will sighed, voicing the words which popped into his head automatically. It was so easy for him, to slip in and out of the minds of killers like he was trying on clothes. Hannibal was no different, not really. “You wouldn’t do that to the food.”

Hannibal smiled at that. “Your ability to empathize is really quite an impressive trait.”

“Well, I specialize in psychopaths and narcissists.” Will replied bitterly, shovelling a forkful of eggs into his mouth. He chewed slowly, focusing on the table in front of him. “You know they’ll be looking for me by now.”

Hannibal just smiled. “As far as the FBI is concerned, there is no connection between the two of us. They will hardly think to look for you here.”

Will mulled the thought over in his mind. Hannibal was right, of course. There was no definitive evidence linking him to the case, Will had stumbled across him by chance alone; it was unlikely that Jack Crawford, or anyone else at the bureau would put the pieces together the same way Will had.

Will pushed his doubts down, casting a glare up at his captor. “We’ll see about that.” He said, mustering whatever hope he could into the expression.

“So we shall.”

*****

Four days passed, each following the same pattern at the first; Hannibal bringing Will meals and then leaving him alone to eat them. It was an odd arrangement, but it was better, Will supposed, than it could have been.

Still, he could feel himself starting to lose his mind. Nothing good came of being locked up in this single room, pacing back-and-forth, with nothing to occupy his thoughts aside from the obvious concern for what would become of him. As time passed, Will became increasingly irritable, as anyone would in the given circumstances, and subsequently, quite nervous.

He took pride in the fact that he had managed to avoid Hannibal noticing he wasn’t eating the meat. Thank god for small miracles, he supposed.

Still, he should’ve realize that no go thing could last forever.

It was on the fifth morning, when Hannibal brought him breakfast, just as he always did, that he did something unexpected. He pulled up a chair, and he sat down across from Will, waiting and watching him with glittering eyes.

Will raised an eyebrow at him.

“Are you going to eat your breakfast?” Hannibal asked.

“I don’t like eating with an audience.”

Hannibal watched him for a long moment before he spoke again. “Is it because you’ve been wasting my food?”

Will felt his pulse quicken at the cold anger in the other man’s tone. He hesitated, then merely shrugged, covering his nervousness with the careless gesture. “Well,” he said plainly, “you can keep me here against my will, certainly, but you can hardly force me to eat the… *things* you do.”

“It’s very rude to insult a person’s cooking when you are a guest in their home, Will.” There was warning in his tone, but Will just laughed. He was past the point of caring.

“Guest isn’t the word I’d use.” Will paused. “And it’s not your cooking I have a problem with, it’s your *butcher* , I find his practices unethical.”

The corners of Hannibal’s mouth rose momentarily at the joke, but fell again almost immediately. “It is not easy to cut meat out of one’s diet, Will. Without the proper supplements, your health will decline if you chose not to eat it.”

“Oh yes, and I’m sure you give a fuck about my health.” Will stood then, he was suddenly very angry; angry at having been locked up in this room; angry at having his free will taken from him. Angry at this man who sat before him and tried to tell him to eat, like it really mattered if he lived or died at this point. “I’m not eating that shit!”

Hannibal moved like lightning rising from his chair, and before Will knew what was happening, he was being shoved roughly backwards into the wall, a hand wrapped around his throat, holding him in place.

Will reached up, clawing at Hannibal’s arm, trying to remove the crushing force from his windpipe, but the angle was all wrong and Hannibal was much stronger than he had expected.

“I have asked you before not to swear in my home, that’s twice you’ve disrespected that rule.” He was so close that Will could smell his aftershave, something spiced and expensive, it reminded him of the soaps in the bathroom. “I have allowed you to live, and I have not treated you ill, the least you could do is be *thankful* and respect my rules.”

He let go of Will’s throat, and Will gasped, slumping backwards against the wall, he would likely have slid to the floor if it hadn’t been for Hannibal’s hand pressing into his chest, steadying him.

He took a moment to catch his breath before he spoke again. “You should just fucking kill me then.” He said, in a voice a bit more shaky and hoarse than he would have liked.

“Your problem, Will, is that you don’t seem to realize which one of us is in charge in this situation.” Hannibal growled, his gaze focused directly on Will’s. Will looked down

reflexively, but Hannibal grabbed his jaw, tilting it back so that he was forced to meet his eyes. His glasses had fallen to the floor when Hannibal had shoved him into the wall, and with nothing to focus on, he was forced to look at the other man's irises, they weren't really brown, he realized, but a deep sort of maroon; the colour of old blood. He shuddered, jaw clenching and unclenching reflexively. "What's to be done about that?"

Will let himself feel, in that moment, what Hannibal was feeling; all blood, and fire, and deep, growling hunger. He swallowed, and Hannibal's eyes dropped to his throat for a moment, watching the movement; he looked like he wanted to bite it out.

"I'm sorry." Will said, focusing his gaze on the bridge of Hannibal's nose. "Thank you. For the food."

"And?"

"I will respect your rules." He felt like a child being chastised, the whole affair was remarkably humiliating.

Hannibal released him then, running the tips of his fingers almost delicately over the sandpaper surface of Will's cheek, his lips quirking in a smile before he pulled his hand away. "Apology accepted." He said, and then stepped back. "Enjoy your lunch, Will." And then he was walking out the door, the lock clicking behind him.

Will slumped once he had gone, back sliding down the wall, tucking his knees up to his chest as he tried to slow the jack-hammer beating of his heart.

Beside him on the ground he saw his glasses; seemingly crushed under a careless foot, frames twisted beyond repair, glass shards ground into the carpet.

*****

Discussions of Will Graham's disappearance were primarily inconclusive. The problem, of course, was that Jack Crawford and the rest of the FBI had no idea where to start. It was common knowledge that Will had been investigating leads on the Chesapeake Ripper when he vanished, he had set up a meeting with Jack because he seemed convinced that he had something. Still, there was nothing conclusive.

The problem with Will Graham was that no one could reconstruct his thinking; finding the Ripper had been easy for him, but for others… well they really had no idea where to even begin.

To put it simply, Jack Crawford and the remainder of the bureau had jack-shit on Graham's whereabouts. In fact, they couldn't even be certain he was alive.

*****

The next time Hannibal brought Will food, there were two chicken drumsticks on the plate.

Will eyed the food, then looked back up at Hannibal, raising an eyebrow.

“A compromise.” Hannibal said shortly. “You need the protein.”

Will stared at him for a long moment, then glanced down at the food again, pulling it towards himself. “Thank you.” He said quietly.

Hannibal merely shrugged, sitting down across from him. “I’m not your enemy, Will, despite what you may think.”

Will laughed harshly, biting into a piece of chicken “Captor and enemy tend to be synonymous.”

“You see me as a captor?” Hannibal asked, crossing his legs neatly in the chair. Will was reminded in that moment hat he was a psychiatrist, that he was talking to Will as he would a patient.

“How do you see yourself?” Will retorted, reversing the question. He’d be damned if he was gonna allow himself to be psychoanalyzed by a serial killer.

“As a host.” Hannibal said, and Will’s brow furrowed at that.

“A host-guest relationship is different,” he paused, “there’s no power imbalance. It’s a voluntary relationship, usually with an underlying friendship. You and me, we’re the opposite of that.”

“We could be friends.” Hannibal smiled neatly, sipping wine from the glass he’d brought for himself. “We have more in common than you’d like to admit.”

Will scoffed. “We could never be friends.” He shook his head. “The light from friendship is so far away, it wouldn’t reach us for a million years.”

“I’m sorry you feel that way.”

Will was struck by the strangeness of their entire interaction. The kindness of Hannibal’s gesture -in bringing Will the chicken to eat- contrasted so starkly with the cruelty he had shown not hours previously. It was starting to give him whiplash. He wondered if, perhaps, Hannibal did -in his own demented way- really want to seek a friendship with Will.

The notion was a jarring one.

All Will could conclude from this interaction was that it felt that they had reached some semblance of silent agreement, though he wasn’t certain that either of them really knew what it was they agreed upon.

Still, it was the best he could get from this for the moment, so he figured he may as well sit back, shut up, and wait to be rescued.

*****

Things changed between them after that, a change which was almost imperceptible, and yet, felt somehow enormous.

Hannibal started to take more of an interest in Will, and often came to sit with him while he ate, bringing food of his own. Will noted distastefully that the meat Hannibal ate was never the same as he meat he served Will. Still, over time he found there was something oddly de-sensitizing about eating across the table from a cannibal, day-after-day, well-aware of what it was -or rather *who* it was- that the other man was consuming.

While they ate, Hannibal would ask him questions, odd things, sometimes about Will's life, often about the work he did with the FBI. He always seemed particularly invested in what it was that Will could do; in the way his mind worked. Will supposed it made sense, given his background in psychiatry, that he would be curious as to the unique way in which Will's mind operated.

Still, he couldn't help but feel it was more than that.

Will answered the questions agreeably enough, it was strange, certainly, but he had to admit that there was something pleasant about having someone to talk to, after nearly a week of relative solitude. So they talked, and they ate, and they attained some sort of makeshift peace.

One day, sitting across from him, Hannibal smiled tightly as he sipped his coffee. "How did you catch me, Will?" He asked.

"I didn't." Will replied. "I wouldn't be here if I'd caught you."

"You know what I mean." Hannibal replied. "If you had caught me, how would you have explained it?"

Will shrugged, looking down at his food. "Why do you wanna know? So you can avoid slipping up again?"

Hannibal shook his head. "*I* know." He said. "I'm asking if *you* know how you did it."

"Of course I do." Will lied. In truth, he couldn't explain how it was he'd caught Hannibal, much more than a feeling in his stomach from the first moment he'd met the man's eyes, much more than the old medical books on the shelves in his office. Nothing that he could get a warrant for, even if he'd wanted one.

"Of course you do." Hannibal laughed, his teeth were slightly crooked, though not unattractively so; incisors pressed forward slightly, which gave the illusion that his teeth were

pointed.

Will sighed. “Okay, I’ll bite,” he said. “How do *you* think I did it?”

Hannibal leaned forwards, resting his elbows on his knees, eyes glittering like rubies in their deep sockets. “It’s quite simple,” a pause, punctuated by a twist of his lips, “you and I are just alike.”

Will felt a shiver run down his spine at that. “No, Dr. Lecter,” he sipped slowly at his whiskey. “We’re not.”

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

Took me a bit to update, my apologies, been busy with school.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will dreamt he was alone in the woods, walking through a landscape made foreign and grey by thick mist. All around him were trees, silhouetted black against the fog as their bare branches reached up towards a swirling, dark sky. Leaves crunched underfoot as he crept along, trying desperately to be silent.

He wasn't alone in the woods, something lurked in the shadows; hunting him. He felt its eyes on his back, raising the hair on his neck, heard the light crack of a twig, the gentle clopping of hooves. Will hurried on, fear driving him forwards, praying that an escape would make itself known. It was after a few moments of walking that Will felt something on the back of his neck, the hot breath of some great, hungry beast. He didn't bother to look over his shoulder, just started to run, sprinting through the woods, feet pounding against the uneven ground as he heard the creature let out a cry before giving chase.

Will pushed on, fear turning to adrenaline in his blood, spurring him onwards. His chest heaved, each breath starting to feel like fire, but he kept going ignoring the ache, ignoring the way his heart pounded against his ribcage, like it was trying to burst free of its moorings, fly off, leave him to fend for himself.

There was light up ahead, something muted and yellow, dulled by the thick mist which haloed it, and Will picked up his pace. A cabin perhaps, some source of safety from the beast which lurked in these woods. He picked up pace; it couldn't be far now.

It was then that his foot hit the root, sending him careening forwards, landing sprawled in the dirt. He rolled over scrambling backwards as the creature advanced on him.

It was a stag, looming and coated in black feathers in place of fur, glinting in the moonlight. It's great horns reached up towards the rapidly darkening sky, pointed and ragged, and somehow Will knew that it was blood which glinted on their surface.

The creature watched him for a moment, black eyes glittering with malice, then it snorted, shaking its great head, hoof pawing at the dirt as it lowered its horns, preparing to charge.

Will burst suddenly into waking, sweat-soaked and panting, hands clawing desperately at the silk sheets. He brought his knuckles to his mouth, biting into the flesh to keep in a scream as

he sat up, knees coming up to his chest, curling in on himself desperately trying to slow his racing heart.

He sat in the darkness for a long moment, trying to calms himself, then he stood, walking over to the bathroom to grab a towel. He hunched over the sink, splashing water on his face before meeting his own gaze in the mirror. His skin looked too thin, like if he squinted he'd be able to see through it, and his eyes were puffy and shadowed from sleep, red veins zig-zagging their way across the whites. He wiped a hand over his face, pulling at the skin, then turned away, stripping off his sweat-soaked shirt tossing it carelessly onto the tile floor. It was nearly four-thirty in the morning, according to the clock on the nightstand, and Will couldn't bring himself to give a fuck whether or not he made a mess.

It wasn't like it was his house anyway.

Will tossed the towel over one shoulder, walking out into the main room. He laid it out over the damp spot on the sheets before climbing back into bed, pulling the blankets up over his head once more, praying for sleep to take him back, but not to bring with it the monsters which seemed to dwell just beneath the surface of his skull.

*****

Hannibal Lecter was a man of routine, something which he held firmly among his -albeit unconventional- virtues. Each morning he woke at six-thirty -save for weekends, when he allowed himself an additional hour of rest, then he made his way to the kitchen to prepare coffee and breakfast. After that he would shower and shave, then dress and prepare for the day ahead of him. It was a comfortable routine; one which he had maintained for many years, and it was also one to which he had recently had to make changes, in order to accommodate his new house guest.

When it came to routine, Hannibal was quickly beginning to realize that Will Graham was a complete and utter disaster. He seemed to follow no distinct patterns of behaviour, and when it came to maintaining a healthy sleep schedule… Well, Hannibal was almost certain Will lacked the barest notion of what that actually constituted. In fact, in the nine days Will had been in his home, Hannibal had begun to notice a worrying decline in the man's appearance, something which signaled he likely wasn't getting more than four hours a night.

He thought of this as he climbed the stairs, a tray of food in hand, making his way to what constituted Will's living space, until such time as the man became more co-operative. He hoped that one day he would be able to permit the man free reign of his home, as any gracious host would, but he also knew that it may be quite some time before such a day arrived, as Will still failed to see Hannibal as more than his enemy.

Hannibal entered the room, and paused, brow furrowing deeply. Will was still asleep, an uncommon occurrence. He lay on his side, his back to the door, the blanket tangled around his legs, leaving his upper body bare. Hannibal closed the door as quietly as he could, locking

it quickly behind him, tucking the key back around his neck, safe beneath the layers of his suit. He stood there, silent and stoic for a long moment, observing.

The air around him smelled of sweat and fear, and Hannibal found himself creeping forwards, slowly approaching the bed, setting the tray lightly on the nightstand, careful not to make a sound.

He stood over Will then, gazing down at him, head cocked to one side. Will shifted, rolling fitfully onto his other side, sweat-soaked hair falling into his face. Hannibal's eyes traced over him, down the line of his neck and shoulder, where rivulets of sweat dipped down into the hollow of his collarbone. There was a scar on his shoulder, mottled white tissue signifying an old wound, a gunshot. Hannibal's brow furrowed as something rose up in his chest, some fiery, possessive rage at the notion that someone else had harmed Will, that someone else had marked his skin in the way Hannibal wanted to so desperately.

He wanted to burn away the mark; to replace it with a scar of his own making.

His fixation with Will Graham -he was loathe to term it 'obsession' as Hannibal viewed himself as above such whimsy- had begun when he stumbled across an article about the capture of the Minnesota Shrike. Sensationalist garbage of course, one could expect no better from Freddie Lounds and her heinous website, however something about the article, something about the photo of Will's stoic face, had stuck in his mind. It was a curious notion to him; the man who could empathize with anyone, could *become* anyone, and because of that, Hannibal had sought out all the information he could on Will Graham, reading additional articles on the Shrike murders, even going so far as to seek out material which Will himself had written and published.

It was a ceaseless fascination, and when the man himself had been hired as a consultant on the Ripper murders, when he had showed up at Hannibal's *own office* , practically gift wrapped, and catching onto Hannibal within moments of meeting him… Well, that was an opportunity that not even he could pass up.

He was pulled from his thoughts when Will let out another pitiful sound, fingers tightening around the smooth fabric of the sheets. Hannibal wondered what he was dreaming of; wanted to crawl up under his skin just to catch a glimpse of what it was that played on the back of his twitching eyelids. He leaned forwards then, bending neatly at the waist, inhaling deeply. He closed his eyes for a long moment, savouring the sharp tang of fear and adrenaline which radiated off the other man.

"Will." He said softly, eyes sweeping over the man's body as he straightened. "Will, wake up."

Will stirred but didn't wake, curling in on himself, pale skin stretching taught over the knobs of his spine.

"Will." He said again, more firm this time.

Will made a small sound, a low sort of cry in the back of his throat. " *No.* " He murmured, burying his face into the pillow. " *No, no, no, no, no…"*

“ *Will* .” Hannibal reached out a tentative hand, placing it on Will’s shoulder. The contact hit Will like an electric shock; jolting him into waking. Will sat up suddenly, scooting backwards across the bed, back pressing against the wall, trying to put as much space between himself and Hannibal as possible.

“Don’t *touch* me!” Will shouted. His chest was heaving, eyes wild and hair clinging, sweat-soaked, to his forehead.

“My apologies, Will.” Hannibal murmured. “You appeared to be in distress.”

Will just stared at him, still pressed back into the wall; eyes locked on Hannibal, tracing his every movement as if he couldn’t tell if the man were moments away from striking. His breathing had yet to even out, if anything, it had become more unsteady, as though Hannibal had shot him with adrenaline, rather than merely laying a hand on his shoulder.

“Bad dreams?” Hannibal asked, pulling his lips into an approximation of a smile.

Will scoffed, bunching the blanket more tightly around his shoulders. “What gave it away?” He growled.

“Fear makes you rude.”

“Can’t say captivity doesn’t contribute to the sharpening of my tongue.”

“I wouldn’t be surprised if it was sharp regardless.” Hannibal couldn’t help himself; he wanted to know Will outside of boundaries of their oppressive relationship. What was Will like around his friends? Did he have friends? How did her interact with his students? His colleagues? He had caught the barest glimpse of the professional side of Will when the agent had been interviewing him, but that hadn’t been quite enough for him. There was so much just under Will’s skin that he wouldn’t show. Hannibal vowed he would know it, even if he had to drag a scalpel across that pale flesh just to find it.

“I suppose it is, yes.” Will still looked profoundly uncomfortable, eyeing the food but making no attempt to move towards it. Hannibal wondered if it had something to do with his current state of undress.

His eyes found Will’s chest for a moment, his tongue slid out to wet his lips.

“Has anyone ever told you it’s rude to stare, Doctor Lecter?” Will all but spit the words.

Hannibal flicked his eyes quickly back to Will's face, angry with himself at his own lapse in control. “Eat your breakfast. If you pull the sheets off of the bed, I will bring you new ones.”

Will watched dumbfounded as Hannibal turned to leave, locking the door behind him.

*****

Will stood under the showerhead, his eyes closed as water ran over his face. He ran his hands over his head, slicking his hair back, shampoo ran from his dark curls and down over his body, clearing away the putrid smell of sweat and fear. His hands paused at the back of his neck, nails digging in as he remembered the weight of Hannibal's gaze. He felt his spine like a seam in his skin, and his nails dug in harder, nearly tearing at his own flesh. He wondered if he could breaks through the seam, split his skin down the center of his back, tear it away so that he no longer bore that stare.

He shuddered as he turned off the water, wrapping a towel around his waist. He still couldn't quite grasp why Hannibal had left him alive; there had to be a reason… something which went further than 'a waste of a brilliant mind', as Hannibal himself had so eloquently put it.

He'd need to keep his guard up. He thought of this as he thought of the hungry look in Hannibal's eyes; thought of how Hannibal had managed to sneak into the room without Will noticing; to get close enough to touch without Will being alerted of his presence.

A final shiver ran through him as he considered the possibility that the man could enter in the middle of the night, and Will decided in that moment, that he'd be doing a lot less sleeping if he could manage it.

*****

Sixteen days. Will Graham had been missing for nine days. Jack Crawford slammed the door to his car door a little harder than he needed to.

Sixteen days, and not a clue. He sighed, jaw clenching and unclenching. He hadn't touched a cigarette in close to fifteen years, but in that moment he found himself wanting one.

Needless to say he was in a particularly foul mood, and the voice which came from behind him did nothing to improve it.

"Agent Crawford, I was hoping to catch you."

Jack turned, coming face-to-face with the angular features of a smiling, redheaded woman. "I won't talk to you, Lounds." He said tersely. Freddie Lounds had written about about Will Graham after the Minnesota Shrike murders, a popular, thought not particularly eloquent article, the title of which had been *It Takes One to Know One: Psycho Fed Catches Psycho Killer* .

"I was just wondering if you'd like to comment on the recent disappearance of Will Graham." She persisted, following him even as he made his way from the car to the entrance to FBI headquarters. "Is it true he was assigned to the investigate the Chesapeake Ripper?"

Jack ignored her.

"Is it true that special agent Graham has been taken hostage by the Chesapeake Ripper?"

Jack whirled around at that, eyes blazing. “Lounds, I told you I won’t talk to you, now you better stop pestering me before I have you charged with harassment.”

“Fine.” Freddie snapped, eyes narrowing at him. "This won't look good for you Jack, letting an unstable agent fall into the hands of a serial killer.

Jack turned and made his way into the building, leaving her in the parking lot. He tried to shrug off the interaction; gritting his teeth as he prepared for the day ahead of him.

*****

Hannibal started bringing him books shortly after that, literature, medical texts, whatever Will asked him for. He’d bring him a book, and in return, Will would talk with him for a time about whatever case Hannibal found to be of interest to him on that particular day.

Will read when Hannibal was away, it calmed him, helped him to ground himself. And it was good to find solace in something other than the words of a madman.

Day-after-day he followed this schedule, he read his books, and he talked with Hannibal at meals, and he started to find himself falling almost comfortably into the routine of it. Will had always liked routine, it made him feel stable, even when that was the furthest thing from what he was.

He missed his dogs, and his house; he missed fixing boat motors and working with his hands. He missed fishing, and he missed going where he wanted when he wanted, and he hoped that he would soon be found.

One morning Hannibal sat across from him over breakfast, the corners of his mouth twitching as he watched Will eat.

“So tell me,” he said, chewing almost methodically, “what does it feel like? To put yourself in the mind of a killer? To feel as he feels in the moment he takes a life?”

Will looked up at him, he no longer had his glasses, as they had been broken when Hannibal had pinned him to the wall, so he had nothing to focus on but the bridge of Hannibal’s nose. “I think you know what it feels like.” Will said, after a short pause.

“Maybe I do.” Hannibal replied shortly. “Maybe I want you to describe it to me anyway.”

“It feels…” Will paused, pressing his lips together, eyes dropping to his food. “Powerful.”

“And you like that power." It should have been a question, but his tone told Will that it wasn't.

“ *I* don’t.” Will said. “The people I-” He cut himself off, shaking his head. “The *killers* like it. I just empathize with them, I feel what they feel.” He paused. “I can tell the difference

between me and them. We're not the same.

"Of course." Hannibal smiled. "But tell me, Will, have you ever thought about killing someone?"

"Everyone has." Will replied shortly. "Doesn't mean I would act on it."

There was another long pause, then; "What about when you shot Garrett Jacob Hobbs? How did that feel?"

Will was quiet for a long moment. "You know about that?"

"I told you before, I know far more about you then I let on." Hannibal watched him darkly, and Will suddenly had a terrible thought.

"Oh my god." The words fell from his lips before he could stop them.

"Something the matter, Will?"

"Oh my *god* ." Will repeated, dropping his fork. "You've been casing me for months, haven't you?" He dropped his fork. "Keeping tabs on me right from the beginning?"

"Your name is fairly well-known in my field." He replied shortly. It was half a answer.

"You must've known they'd put me on the Ripper case." He suddenly felt very sick. "My god I played right into you're fucking lap, didn't I? Practically came gift-wrapped."

"Will." There was a warning underneath Hannibal's tone. "Language."

Will shifted, pushing himself further back onto the bed, trying to put space between himself and the hungry look in Hannibal's eye, he suddenly was reminded that this man was far more intelligent than he could ever hope to be, and far more terrifying than anything he'd faced in the past. "God, you planned this whole fucking thing!"

There was something very heavy behind Hannibal's eyes, a calm before a storm as he spoke. "I really think you should stop this train of thought. Lest you do something rash."

Will lunged at him. It was only a moment before he found himself with his arm twisted behind his back, his face shoved against the wall, Hannibal's weight heavy against his back.

"Get off of me." Will replied, attempting to pry his arms out of the other man's grasp.

"Are you going to calm down?" The voice was close to his ear, close enough he could feel the heat of Hannibal's breath. "I can't have you attempting to hurt me in your desire to escape."

"Fine." He felt trapped, crushed not only by the physical weight of the man holding him in place, but by the emotional weight of his realization, Hannibal was so much smarter than Will had imagined him to be, had some underlying purpose for keeping him here. "I'm sorry."

“Apology accepted.” Hannibal pulled back, Will's shoulder ached from the way it had been twisted. He rolled it absently as he turned back around. Hannibal was smoothing his hands over his suit, calmly removing the creases. Will watched him, and found himself wondering how the man could flick back-and-forth so quickly between this calm exterior and the monster which seemed to dwell beneath his skin.

“I’m having a guest for dinner this evening.” Hannibal blindsided him with the sudden change in subject. “While she is here, you will keep quiet, and you will not draw attention to yourself.”

Will opened his mouth to say something, but was cut off. “If she becomes aware of your presence, I will not hesitate to kill her. Is that understood?”

Will nodded.

“Good.”

And then Hannibal turned on one heel and walked out the door.

*****

Alana Bloom had known Hannibal Lecter for many years, had studied under him in the later years of her education. He was an old friend of hers, someone whom she trusted with all of her heart, so when he had invited her to dinner to take her mind off things, Alana had not hesitated to accept the invitation.

She sat across the table from Hannibal, sipping wine, and picking at her lamb as she tried to ignore the worry that twisted in her gut. Will had been missing for more than a week now, with no evidence to offer insight as to what had become of him.

“How are you Alana?” Hannibal asked, and Alana nearly laughed at the question.

“I’m not great.” She admitted.

“You still haven’t found your missing friend?” He sipped his wine slowly. “What was his name?”

“Will Graham.” Alana replied tightly. “And no, we still haven’t found him.”

“I’m sorry.” He said. “I can only hope you find him soon.” He paused, chewing slowly. “Though often missing persons cases are most likely to be solved in the first forty-eight hours.”

“I’m aware.” She replied, looking at her food for a long moment.

“But you keep up hope? That’s good. Sometimes hope is all we have.”

“It’s more than hope.” She said simply. “I know Will, I know he’s alive.” She paused. “And we’re going to find him.” Hannibal just nodded, taking another bite of his lamb.

“Were you close?” The question surprised her.

“I suppose.” Alana paused, thoughtful. “As close as anyone could be to Will Graham. He’s a hard man to know.”

Hannibal hummed, as if weighing her words in his mind, but said nothing else about the topic of conversation.

*****

“That was Alana Bloom.”

It was the first thing that Will said when Hannibal entered with his dinner. He had heard her voice through the floor, known it from the moment it touched his ears. It had shocked him, he hadn’t even considered that there would be a connection between the two, but it made sense, they were both highly renowned in their field, it wouldn’t surprise him to learn that they had worked together in the past.

“So it was.” Said Hannibal, setting the tray down beside him.

“She’ll be looking for me.” Will continued, unable to stop the smile that tugged at his lips.

“So she will.” Hannibal met his eye then, and smiled. “But not here. She suspects no link between the two of us.” He straightened. “Goodnight Will.” And then he turned and left without another word.

Will sat on the bed, glaring at his food. He clenched his fists then, nails digging into his palms, sharp enough to draw blood. He wanted to yell, to scream out his frustration for as long as it took for it to leave him completely. But he wouldn’t give Hannibal the satisfaction.

So instead he lay back, squeezing his eyes shut and pressing the pillow down onto his face until he couldn’t breathe, couldn’t see; until the world fell away around him.

Chapter End Notes

Poor Will, he's having a real shit time of it. I hadn't written from Hannibal's perspective before, it was fun in a disturbing sort of way...

Side-note, this is verging far more into psychological thriller territory than I originally intended, but I'm digging it, so I hope y'all are digging it too.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

(technically it's 10 after midnight but happy not really valentines day!!!! Guess I chose a good day to post this chapter SPECIFICALLY) (and yes, that's foreshadowing, please enjoy.)

Tw for blood I guess, not a lot, and also I can't imagine anyone reading fanfic of this show cares too much about blood but I thought I'd slap one on there anyway.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal asked about Garrett Jacob Hobbs a lot; he seemed stuck on it, like it was something he wouldn't let go until Will told him what he wanted to hear. He wanted Will to tell him how he had felt in the moment when he had taken the other man's life. Another week passed, coupled with another line of questions that Will didn't want to answer. Still, he knew he couldn't keep this up forever; eventually he'd have to give Hannibal *something* .

"You always lose your tongue when I mention the Minnesota Shrike." Hannibal said one day.

"It's not an event I like reliving." Will admitted. "I already worked through it with my own psychiatrist, I hardly need you poking around my head, stirring up old bull-" he stopped himself before he could swear, a mistake he had no desire to make again, "old memories."

"You consider his death different than the others you've relived?"

"I do."

"Because he was your victim?"

Will laughed, shaking his head. "I don't consider Garrett Jacob Hobbs my victim."

"What do you consider him?" Hannibal cocked his head to one side, Will was beginning to notice that other man never held his head quite straight, instead using it as a method of punctuation for his sentences.

"Dead." He replied, cocking his own head with the words, mirroring Hannibal's gesture.

"And do you have guilt over that?"

Will paused, licking his lips as he met Hannibal's gaze. "Garrett Jacob Hobbs was a psychopath." He said simply. "He needed to be stopped."

"And you were the one to stop him?"

Will said nothing, but felt his jaw clench of its own volition.

Hannibal just nodded. “When you pulled the trigger, how did it feel?”

Will was silent for a long moment, then the words fell from his tongue of their own volition. “It felt *righteous* .”

Hannibal stood from his chair then, crossing the distance between them to the place where Will was leaning against the wall beside his bed. “What I wouldn’t give to have seen it.” He reached out a hand, cupping the side of Will’s face almost gently Will winced at the contact, his head jerking abruptly away from the touch, his eyes squeezing shut for a moment. “I’m sure you were magnificent.”

Will flinched away from the touch, his eyes dropping to the floor, tracing the intricate patterns of the carpet. His brain took the opportunity to wonder how much the rug had cost, and Will almost laughed aloud at the ridiculousness of such a thought.

“Look at me, Will.” Hannibal said quietly. And Will did, his gaze flicking up to meet Hannibal’s eye. Hannibal smiled back at him, leaning so close that their foreheads nearly touched. “That wasn’t so hard, was it?” The question was rhetorical, Will knew that, still he was tempted to reply to the condescension with a defensive remark.

There was a long moment in which the two merely stared at each other, and in that moment, Will wondered if Hannibal was going to kiss him. He wasn’t sure what he would do if he did; letting him seemed the most intelligent response, give the psychopath what he wants, it’s safer that way. But there was also a part of him that would fight back, the part of him that would shove Hannibal away, tell him to fuck off, to kill him, Will didn’t care.

He realized with a twinge of shame, that there was some part of him that *wanted* Hannibal to kiss him.

Psychologically speaking, it made sense. An empathy disorder coupled with captor bonding made for a terrible combination; his brain reaching out, clutching desperately for stability, only to find evil lurking in the space where he desperately sought safety. It wasn’t an illogical impulse, but instead a mirror of the other man’s desires, an absorption of traits through prolonged proximity and overriding survival instinct.

Why then did Will feel so disgusted with himself?

Hannibal’s fingers traced almost tenderly on the rough stubble on Will’s cheek and he pursed his lips. “You need a shave.”

“I-” Will frowned. “What?”

"I don’t like the beard, I think you’d look better without it.” Hannibal was looking at Will like he was a piece of meat, which, considering the man’s dietary preferences, wasn’t far from the truth.

“No one’s gonna see me locked up in this room.” Will replied.

“I will.” There was something disturbingly possessive about his tone.

Will realized then that there was no way he was going to win this argument. “Fine.” He said. “Just bring me a razor and I’ll do it.”

“No.” Hannibal surprised him with the sternness behind the words. “I want to do it.”

*****

Tied to a chair in the bathroom with Hannibal looming over him holding a straight razor was exactly the opposite of where Will had wanted to be, but here he was, watching the other man froth up shaving cream to put on his face, beside him on the counter was a razor which glinted ominously under the bathroom lights, sharp enough to split a hair down the middle. He swallowed at the thought of that blade -in the hands of the Chesapeake Ripper no less- brushing over the delicate skin of his throat. He tried to think of a way out of this situation, but kept coming up blank. It seemed that the best thing to do was to sit still and pray that Hannibal liked him better alive.

“You look nervous, Will.” Hannibal said, there was something almost mischievous in his eyes as he approached with the bowl of lather. “You shouldn’t be. You have nothing to worry about.”

Will scoffed at that. “Forgive me, Dr. Lecter, but that’s a very sharp blade.”

Hannibal crouched before him, meeting his eye. “If I wanted to kill you, you’d already be dead.” Will found that he believed him wholeheartedly.

"Somehow that doesn't reassure me."

Hannibal took the brush from the bowl and began to rub lather on Will’s face, moving the brush in small circles, thoroughly coating each hair. Will didn’t bother to offer any resistance, tilted his head when Hannibal needed him to.

It was only when Hannibal had finished with the bowl of lather and set it on the counter, returning with the razor open in his hand, that Will started to get nervous. He couldn’t help the way his eyes followed the blade, wide and darting, seeking some impossible escape.

Will looked at the man standing over him -his jacket now discarded, shirtsleeves rolled up, blade in his hand- and his breath hitched in his throat, his tongue flicking out to wet his lips involuntarily. He noticed Hannibal’s eyes flick down to study the movement before he approached, leaning down to examine Will’s face.

“Now, Will,” Hannibal said slowly, “I’m going to need you to stay very still, can you do that for me?”

Will closed his eyes for a long moment, biting the inside of his cheek hard enough to draw blood, then he opened them again and nodded. “Yeah, yeah okay, I can do that.”

“Good boy,” Hannibal’s voice was low and close to his ear, and Will felt a shiver run down his spine at the words.

Hannibal touched a hand lightly to Will’s forehead, guiding his head so that it was tilted back and to the right. Will flinched reflexively at the contact, but allowed himself to be maneuvered. He shut his eyes, pressing his lips together as he felt the razor make contact with his right cheek. The touch was light, delicate even, as it slid smoothly along the grain of Will’s stubble.

He turned Will’s head to the other side then, repeating the motion on his left cheek before moving to his chin and upper lip. Will kept his eyes closed the entire time, he knew if he saw the razor coming towards him he’d only flinch, and if he flinched he’d only end up cut.

He felt rather than saw Hannibal pull away, and opened his eyes to see the other man watching him with an intense, unveiled sort of admiration.

“I’ll need to get your neck now,” he said. “Please.”

Will froze then, this was the part he’d been afraid of; Hannibal’s razor pressed right against his throat. He found, in that moment, that he couldn’t bring himself to tip his head back, couldn’t allow such vulnerability in the face of such a monster.

“Will, I would like you to tip your head back,” his tone was more stern now, *commanding*.

“I think I can shave my neck myself, Dr. Lecter,” he replied curtly.

Hannibal’s lips quirked slightly, and then his hand slid around the back of Will’s head, an almost gentle caress. A moment later his fingers found Will’s hair and he yanked abruptly, tugging Will’s head back to expose the length of his throat.

“You really need to start trusting me, Will,” he murmured.

“Is that what this is?” Will asked as Hannibal bent to examine his throat. “A trust exercise?”

“Hardly.” Hannibal replied. “This is merely for my enjoyment.”

Will opened his mouth to reply to that but Hannibal cut him off.

“Please don’t speak while I’m working, Will,” he said simply. “It causes your throat to move, which only serves to make my job more difficult.”

Will fell silent at that, resisting the urge to swallow nervously.

He shut his eyes, closed his mouth, and held still, feeling Hannibal’s blade swipe slowly across his throat and jaw, waiting for him to finish. He had to admit there was something oddly meditative about the whole exercise. Under different circumstances, it may have even been calming, and if he pushed aside the knowledge that the man holding a blade to his throat would murder him at the drop of a pin, it was. Hannibal’s hand loosened its grip on his hair, fingers running soothingly through the dark curls at the nape of Will’s neck.

When Hannibal pulled away, Will couldn't help the small sigh of relief that escaped him. "Finished?" He raised an eyebrow.

Hannibal moved around him in a slow circle, seeming to inspect Will's face and neck for any remaining hair. "One moment," he put two fingers under Will's jaw, tilting his head upwards and to the right, "I missed a spot." He brought the blade to Will's neck once more, only this time there was more pressure behind it, and Will inhaled sharply at the sting of the cold steel across his skin, followed by the warm trickle of blood. His neck jerked reflexively away from the blade.

Hannibal chuckled. "Relax Will, it's only a nick."

"You did that on purpose," the blood was still running down his neck, seeping into the collar of his white dress shirt.

"Perhaps I did."

Will glanced at Hannibal, and found that the man's eyes were locked on the spot of blood on his throat. He looked like he wanted to lick it off his skin, and Will felt his breath hitch in his throat at the image, for a moment, he could almost feel the other man's mouth on his throat. "Could you at least get a tissue?" He spoke in a voice much rougher than intended.

Hannibal reached out, cupping the now smooth surface of Will's cheek, and Will found himself leaning into the warmth of the touch. "You look much better," he whispered, tucking an errant curl behind Will's ear. "Though a haircut wouldn't be a bad idea."

Will clenched his jaw. "What, so you can slice me open with scissors instead of a razor?" he retorted.

"It's hardly my fault you look so lovely in red," Hannibal all but purred, eyes dropping to the cut on Will's neck once more.

"What do you want with me?" Will's voice was scarcely more than a whisper when he spoke again.

Hannibal smiled at him, almost fondly. "I want to understand you, but more than that, I want to help you understand yourself." He paused, thumb stroking delicately over Will's cheekbone. "You have the potential to be something *magnificent* ."

"And you want to help me reach that potential?"

"If you'll let me."

Will nodded. "Okay," he said, because he didn't know what else there was to say, and because if Hannibal thought he was getting what he wanted out of Will, he would be less likely to harm him, at least until he realized he was being lied to.

Hannibal pulled back then, smiling like a shark. "Good," he said. "Now, let's get you cleaned up." He gestured to the cut on the side of Will's neck.

He walked away then, returning a moment later with a washcloth and some gauze.

He wiped the cloth slowly over Will's neck, clearing away the blood which had dried there. "It appears to have already closed." Hannibal smiled. "I told you it was no more than a nick."

"Have a lot of experience cutting people, Dr. Lecter?"

"But of course." He cut a short strip of gauze from the roll, taping it in place over the cut. Hannibal ran his hand gently over the length of Will's throat then took a step back, admiring his work. "There, all better." He paused. "I'm going to untie you now, Will." he murmured. "I know the proximity of the blade is tempting, but I ask you to refrain from doing anything stupid."

"I won't." Will looked up at Hannibal, head cocked to one side, eyes watching him through dark lashes. "I promise."

Hannibal's lips quirked but he said nothing, walking around the back of Will and stooping to unfasten the bonds.

Will waited patiently, keeping his breathing steady and his muscles relaxed so as not to hint to Hannibal his next course of action. As soon as the ties were loose enough, Will slipped his bonds, slamming his elbow backwards into Hannibal's face, then launching himself out of the chair and across the room in the direction of the counter. He grabbed the razor from where it lay on the marble surface, whirling around to face his pursuer.

Hannibal was climbing to his feet, wiping blood from his lips, a few loose strands of hair hanging into his eyes. He looked frightening, barely human, top lip curled in snarl as he watched Will with undisguised hunger.

"You made a promise, Will." Hannibal tsked. "It was remarkably rude of you to break it."

"Circumstantially justifiable." Will growled, holding the blade aloft in front of him.

Hannibal's lips quirked for a moment, and then he lunged, throwing himself into Will and sending them both tumbling to the floor in a tangle of limbs. His hand was gripping Will's wrist, twisting it, turning the blade around on him as he struggled to get the upper hand.

Will struggled to resist the pressure, arm shaking with the effort. He tensed, throwing all of his weight into a shoving upwards, rolling them over in order to pin Hannibal down. The blade slipped from his hand as he did, skidding across the floor and landing five feet away. Will paused, glancing to where the blade lay, and then back to where he'd pinned Hannibal, deliberating for a long moment. Then he made up his mind, lunging for the blade. His fingers nearly reached it, but he wasn't quite quick enough, a strong hand catching his ankle, yanking him backward.

They wrestled for a moment, each one scrabbling desperately to attain dominance over the situation. Will eventually gained the upper hand, pinning Hannibal to the ground, holding his wrists above his head. He shifted then, holding both wrists under one hand, wrapping the

other around Hannibal's throat, not quite choking, but applying enough pressure to pin him in place.

It startled him when he met Hannibal's eye and found that the other man was smiling.

"Give me the key!" Will growled.

Hannibal's tongue flicked out, licking blood from his split lip. "Are you going to kill me, Will?"

"Give me the fucking key or I swear I will!"

Hannibal's smile widened at that, the expression almost gleeful. "I was right," his voice was painted with something like reverence. "You are magnificent."

Will frowned at him for a moment, then shook it off, knowing the other man was just trying to shake him. He tightened his grip on Hannibal's throat.

"I'll save you the trouble of searching my corpse," Hannibal was still smiling. "It's in my front left pocket." Will cast a glance at Hannibal's jacket, which was draped over the counter on the opposite side of the room. "Not my jacket."

Will glanced down reflexively. He deliberated for a moment, realizing that he was without a weapon to use as a threat and would have to release either Hannibal's wrists or his throat in order to get the key; both of which were remarkably dangerous.

"Something the matter?" It was closest thing to a grin he'd ever seen on Hannibal's face.

Will reasoned that it was safer to keep his grip on the other man's wrists, and released the grip on his neck, jamming his hand into Hannibal's pocket. He couldn't help but be hyper aware of their position; with him straddling Hannibal, pinning his wrists, hand on his thigh.

Hannibal's pocket was surprisingly deep, which was why it took Will a few moments to realize that he had lied about the key.

Those few extra second of fumbling were all it took for Hannibal to take back the upper hand. He moved quickly, head-butting Will in the forehead hard enough to send him reeling backwards, seeing stars, then he rolled them over once more, reversing their position so that Will's arms were pinned above his head. His hand went to Will's throat but he didn't apply pressure, instead he ran his hand gently over the skin there. There was that tenderness again, and in that moment, Will realized his own power, a means of manipulation he hadn't been previously aware of.

He bit down on the thumb as it came close to his lips.

Hannibal inhaled sharply, a quick hiss of breath as he pulled his hand back, his pupils blew wide with the contact, his gaze intensely curious as it swept over Will's face.

Hannibal stared down at him like he wanted to devour him whole. His hand slid around the back of Will's neck, the tips of his fingers finding their way into the dark curls at his nape. He

was waiting for Will to make another move, Will realized, but he would not bend to Hannibal's desires so easily, could not willingly surrender himself so readily to the monster who loomed over him.

He licked his lips. "I believe it's your move, Dr. Lecter."

"You may call me by my first name," he smiled, it wasn't really an offer.

"It's your move, *Hannibal ,*" Will let his tongue curl around the name, realizing he'd never said it aloud before.

Hannibal leaned closer, so close Will could feel the ghost of his words over his own lips. "This is not what you want, Will. I have no interest in taking something not freely given." And just like that he was pulling away again.

"I'm going to let you up now, Will." And then he did, his weight was gone, and Will climbed slowly, shakily, to his feet. His wrists ached from the force of Hannibal's grip and he wondered if there would be bruises. Hannibal was looking at him with blood smeared across his lips and something like adoration in his eyes.

Will couldn't meet his eye.

The two men watched each other for a long time, neither seeming certain of what came next. It was Hannibal who finally broke the silence, his voice sweet as honey-wine. "While I have made it clear that I don't wish to do you harm; if you threaten me again, you will force my hand," he crossed the room, crouching to pick up the blade. "Is that clear?"

" *Crystal ,*" Will all but spat the word, not pulling his eyes from Hannibal for even a second. He was lying of course. Hannibal underestimated him; and Will saw that as an opportunity. He could play nice, at least for the moment; he could lie in wait and make Hannibal believe he had won.

And when the moment was right, when Hannibal's guard was down, he would strike.

*****

Will dreamt again that night; he was back in the woods, sprawled out on the ground, the stag looming over him, preparing to charge. He rolled to one side; tumbling just in time to escape the hooves which pounded towards him. The creature raced past, roaring as it missed its mark, instead colliding with the broad trunk of a tree. Will took the opportunity to climb to his feet, bolting in the direction of the yellow light. Behind him the creature rose, hooves pounding the earth as it raced after him. Will pushed on, ahead of him a cabin came into view, small and cozy, it reminded him of a lake house he had once stayed in with his father when he was young. Yellow light poured from its windows, promising warmth and safety within, if he could only make it in time.

Will raced up the steps and onto the porch, slamming the full force of his weight into the door as he scrabbled for the knob only to find it locked. In a bout of desperation he pounded his fists on the door, trying to block out the sound of hooves tearing up earth behind him.

As if in answer to his prayers, the door swung open, hinges creaking loud as a scream, and Will found himself face-to-face with a being of nightmarish proportions. The beast loomed before him; long and black, and only vaguely resembling a human. Great antlers protruded from a skeletal black face which smiled at him; thin lips pulling back from pointed teeth. The beast stepped to one side, raising a clawed hand in a gesture of invitation.

Will glanced behind him at the approaching stag, then ahead of him at what may well be the devil himself, watching him hungrily with eyes the colour of old blood.

Trapped between two monsters Will did the only thing he could and stepped into the lair of the waiting beast.

Chapter End Notes

So... yeah...
You're welcome I think? Please no that I am well-aware I am a bad person, but I will not apologize for a bleeding Will Graham, because, you know, who doesn't need one of those?

Anyway things are getting heavy, and I'm actually excited about where this is going/proud of how it's turning out. So stay tuned, folks!

(unless you hate it, then I guess don't stay tuned???)

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

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Chapter Notes

sorry it took me so long to update, school's been hectic. Also I've really been trying to take your comments into account, so keep up the good work guys, feedback is always super helpful

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will stood over the sink, splashing water over his face before glancing up to meet his own eye in the mirror. His heart was still pounding from the dream, head still foggy with fitful sleep. He frowned, raising a hand, running it over the smooth surface of his cheek, it'd been years since he'd shaved this cleanly and the sensation was unfamiliar to him.

He barely recognized himself; clean-shaven, hair slicked back with the water. He shuddered, raising a finger to touch the small cut on his neck. His eyes trailed over the bruises on his wrists, he prodded one, and felt pain shoot through his arm.

He didn’t look like himself. He didn’t look like himself at all.

He bore the marks of the changes Hannibal wrought on him painted across his skin for all to see.

He didn’t look like himself because he was not, in that moment, himself, but rather a collection of broken pieces which Hannibal sought to reassemble into something which better fit whatever it was he saw in Will.

Will clenched his fist at his side. In his mind he drove it into the mirror, glass breaking against his knuckles. He saw cracks spiderweb out across the reflection of his face. In his mind Will watched himself shatter into a hundred glass fragments and scatter across the floor.

In reality he braced himself over the sink, chest heaving against the catch in his throat.

He vowed then that he would escape this place no matter the cost. He wouldn’t let himself be changed; he’d die before he’d become the thing that Hannibal wanted him to be.

*****

When Hannibal came with breakfast the next morning, Will was pacing. He stopped when the door opened, trying not to look nervous, instead shifting and leaning back against the wall beside the window, arms crossed defensively over his chest.

Hannibal just blinked at him, expression giving nothing away as he deposited the tray on the table.

Breakfast in bed . Will's brain supplied, and he nearly chuckled at the domesticity of the thought.

"Good morning, Will." Hannibal's eyes swept over him slowly, observationally.

"Morning, Doctor Lecter." Will replied tersely, not moving from where he stood.

"I've told you before, you may call me by my first name." Hannibal murmured, drifting slowly across the room. Will held his ground; he had nowhere else to go.

"I'd rather not."

"You create distance between us to compensate for previous intimacy." Hannibal was three feet away now. Two feet. One. "A normal reaction."

"I'd appreciate it if you didn't psychoanalyze me." Hannibal closed the distance between them, and Will found himself backed into the wall, unable to move any farther away than he already had. "I find it *invasive* ."

"Force of habit." Hannibal murmured. "The things you find invasive differ situationally."

" *A normal reaction* ." Will quoted.

"You look nervous." Hannibal met his eye then. "Are you nervous, Will?"

"No." Nervous was far from what he was feeling.

Hannibal merely tilted his head to one side as if asking for more explanation.

Will offered none. "You know something? You like to pretend you're unreadable, and you're good… really." He grinned. "That… *person-suit* you wear is well-tailored, but there's one thing you can't seem to disguise."

"And what's that?"

"It's your eyes, Dr. Lecter." Will said thickly. "You have the eyes of a predator. *That's* how I caught you."

Hannibal laughed. “An interesting theory.” There was a thickness on the air between them, the weight of yesterday's interaction wore heavily on them.

"Could you take a step back, please?"

Hannibal did. Will tried not to visibly slump with relief. The closeness was too much for him, he didn't trust himself. Something in his brain whispered with the urge to touch. Will shoved his hands into the pockets of his slacks, balling them into tight fists.

"I understand your need for boundaries, and I will respect that, you need only tell me."

"You say that like you don't make all the rules. Hard to have boundaries without freedom."

"All the more reason to put them in place." Hannibal smiled. "I would rather you're as comfortable as possible during your stay here."

God he made it sound like a fucking motel. "Well right now, I'd like to be left alone to eat my breakfast." He replied tightly, lip curling with disdain.

"Of course." Hannibal turned towards the door. "All you ever need do is ask, Will." There was more weight to the words than Will knew what to do with.

After Hannibal left he collapsed into a chair, he wasn't hungry. The cogs in his brain began to work, forming a plan, recklessly stupid sure, but he didn't have many options.

*****

Freddie Lounds took great pride in her work. Common consensus was that she shouldn’t, after all, the career of a tabloid journalist in a world of ‘fake news’ was hardly an aspirational career. Hell, it wasn’t even particularly unique anymore, what with all the bullshit articles a person could find in their Facebook newsfeed. But Freddy had worked for her position, starting out as a cancer editor for some shit-tier garbage newspaper that wasn’t good for much aside from wiping your ass with.

But back in those days that job had been her whole life. She’d hated every second of it, but it didn’t matter because she was *good* at it.

So good in fact, that it didn’t take long for her supervisors to catch on to the fact that she was too good for cancer. Now she pretty much wrote about whatever she wanted, and what Freddie wanted to write about was murder.

It wasn’t glamorous, mind you; hardly the sort of thing people won Pulitzers for, but it was just the sort of thing that sold well in the modern, fear-based mass media world. People didn’t want to read about real problems, no one gave a fuck about who was starving in Haiti, or political tensions between Sudan and South Sudan, heck, no one really cared about *cancer*

anymore, because they didn't wanna think about whether or not they could get it from checking their Instagram too much.

But people *loved* to read about murder, loved to know that there were people out there who were far more fucked up than their personal problems. Of all the media Freddie had had the privilege of working with, murder was by far the most lucrative, and whoever got the details on the Chesapeake Ripper was guaranteed a bestseller.

Add in the mystique of a potentially kidnapped FBI agent -especially one as valuable and notorious as *Will Graham* - and she practically had a movie deal in her lap.

Freddie Lounds took great pride in her work, even if they work of a tabloid journalist was considered nothing to take pride in. And if she wanted to get ahead in that particular line of work sometimes she had to bend the rules a bit.

Freddie kept this in her mind as the lock to Will Graham's farm house -now abandoned for several weeks- clicked open under her skilled hands. She stood up, opening the door, a smile tugging at her lips as she crept inside.

Hollywood, she had heard, was an excellent place for the obnoxious and wealthy, and if this went the way she wanted it too… Well, she would be very wealthy indeed.

*****

Will's plan bordered on idiocy, however the notion came nowhere close to stopping him. He supposed this was one of those situations in which desperate times really *did* call for desperate measures. He stayed awake that night, anxiety tying knots in his gut, and just before dawn he dragged himself out of bed, splashing cold water on his face and dressing himself. He wished he still had his own clothes, but he wouldn't be surprised to learn that Hannibal had burned them, so instead he pulled on a light blue dress-shirt and a pair of dark slacks, and he kept in his mind that if things went according to plan he'd be home soon enough; with his own clothes and his own food, and he'd curl up in his own bed, dogs asleep on the floor beside him.

If everything went according to plan, Will would never have to see Hannibal Lecter again outside of a courtroom.

When the clock read 8:30 Will positioned himself behind the door with baited breath.

*****

Hannibal entered the room carrying Will's breakfast at exactly 8:35 am as per usual, and was surprised to find the room seemingly empty. Will was not in bed, or at the table in the corner. He wasn't even standing by the window peering longingly through the drapes as he so often did. Before Hannibal had time to fully process this information, however -or even close the door behind him- he was hit suddenly in the back of the head with something heavy. The force of the blow knocked him to his knees, and the tray fell from his arms, coffee and egg spilling out across the ornately patterned rug.

Behind him came the sound of retreating footsteps, and Hannibal turned just in time to see Will slip out the door, disappearing down the hall. He stood then, pausing to rub at the sore spot on the back of his skull.

He couldn't help the smile that tugged on his lips as he gave chase.

*****

Will wasted no time after he struck Hannibal; tossing the book to one side and racing out the door; not bothering to wait and see whether or not he was being followed. He bolted down the hallway, skidding around the corner, not pausing as he launched himself down the stairs, gripping the railing to keep from flying forwards with the momentum as he half-leapt towards the lower story of Hannibal's home. He sped through the living room, heart jumping up into his throat when his eyes locked on the front door. He sped up, sliding across the floor in his socks, the full-force of his momentum slamming him into the hardwood as he scrambled for the knob.

Locked.

Will fumbled for a moment, quickly discovering that the inside mechanism required a key to open. He swore then. Behind him Will could hear footsteps pounding down the stairs and he stiffened, deliberating for a moment before darting off in another direction.

Moments later Will found himself in the kitchen; perhaps the nicest kitchen he'd ever seen, if he ignored what it was that was cooked there. Will paused, glancing around, shaking his head to clear it. He couldn't hear Hannibal anymore, though he doubted that was a good sign. If anything it meant the other man had switched approaches and was attempting to sneak up on him.

Will crossed the room as quietly as he could. At the center of it was a granite-topped island, on which sat a knife block. He grabbed the largest blade there, ignoring the twist in his stomach when he thought of what it and previously been used for, and then quickly ducked into the gap between the fridge and the wall; scarcely daring to breathe as he waited.

Will considered his options as he waited. He had observed, over the last few days, that Hannibal kept the key on a string around his neck. A clever method, as it meant Will would have to be extraordinarily close if he wanted to take it from him. He would have to prepare

himself for the worst case scenario, as it was very likely that one of them wouldn't make it out of this kitchen alive.

His hand tightened on the handle of the knife as he thought of sinking it into Hannibal's gut, warm blood spilling out over his fingers as the light left his captor's eyes. In that moment, he realized that he *wanted* to do it. Killing Hannibal would be the most satisfying thing in the world.

Will held his breath as he heard Hannibal come around the corner, heart leaping in his chest, every muscle in his body tensing with anticipation.

"I know you're in here, Will." Hannibal's voice floated across the air towards him. "If you come out now, it will be easier on you."

Will didn't move, listened to the near absolute silence, the quiet whisper of sock-clad feet on linoleum. He heard the hiss of metal-on-metal as a knife was pulled from the block. Will's lips pulled up in the beginnings of a grimace. Some part of him liked the idea of a fair fight, even though he knew it made things more difficult for him in the long run.

"I warned you not to force my hand." He paused, and Will tensed, his voice was closer now. Will heard Hannibal inhale deeply and wondered if the other man could smell him. "When I find you, I will not hold back."

Will waited a long moment, not daring to breathe for fear of being found. Hannibal crept closer, so close that Will swore he could hear the beating of the other man's heart, slow and steady, so different from the nervous flutter of his own.

He was running out of options, he realized, and he remembered then the door he had seen on the opposite side of the kitchen, he didn't much care where it lead, only hoped that it was unlocked, so that he could at least put something solid between himself and the knife wielding serial killer who was currently stalking this kitchen.

So he did the only thing he could; burst out of his hiding place, using the element of surprise to his advantage, slamming into Hannibal so that the man collided with the island at the center of the room and then racing across the room towards the door. He was relieved when the knob gave way under his hands and he threw it open, rushing into the room and slamming it shut behind him before Hannibal could catch up, pressing the full force of his weight against the door to keep it shut against the inevitable attempts to force it open.

There was a long moment of silence, and Will tensed, waiting for Hannibal to slam himself into the door, to force it open and find his way in. He was surprised when it never came, instead he heard the quiet pad of footsteps towards the door.

Will could almost see him standing there, head cocked to one side in that odd expression of contemplation he always took on. Then his voice came, seeping through the cracks in the door. "You can't hide in my pantry forever, Will."

Will actually laughed at that. "Can't I?" He asked.

“Don’t be ridiculous, you're going to have to come out eventually.” He sounded condescending, Will was reminded again that he was a therapist, and every therapist he’d ever known had sounded condescending. Must be some kind of trick of the trade.

“The hell I can!” he called back. “I’ll stick this kitchen knife in my gut before I let you in here!”

“Would you really?” Hannibal said, Will heard a shift, something sliding down the door and realized that Hannibal was sitting on the kitchen floor on the opposite side of the door, the wood the only thing separating them from being back to back, leaning into one another's warmth. Will wondered if Hannibal could feel his heartbeat through the door the way he imagined he could feel Hannibal's. “You don’t seem the type to hurt yourself, even in an act of desperation; to enact violence against your aggressor…” Will could almost hear the smile tugging at his lips. “That fits you much better.”

“Time for an impromptu therapy session, Dr. Lecter?” Will smirked.

“If that’s what you need, Will,” Hannibal replied.

“I think it’s what you need,” Will replied smoothly. “You’ve been trying to sink your claws into my skull ever since you got me here.” A pause. “But if it keeps you happy, then ask away.”

We can start with the fact that this is your second escape attempt,” Hannibal said slowly. “You’re making it difficult for me to help you, Will.”

“Well, it might be easier if I had the slightest inkling that you actually *wanted* to help me,” Will returned. “You just want to get your fingers under my skin, to root around in my brain and see what you can rearrange that’ll make me more like the thing you seem to think I am.”

“Why are you so convinced my reasons are to your detriment?”

“You’re kidding me right?”

Silence on the other side of the door.

“You’re a psychopath, you fucking *kidnapped* me!” he all but yelled. “You’re keeping me here against my will, how is that *not* to my detriment?”

Hannibal was silent for a long moment, then he sighed. “An understandable reaction.”

“Hope you don’t mind if I break into your wine. You’ve certainly got enough of it.”

“A last drink for the condemned man?” Hannibal asked.

“Something like that.” Will grabbed the nearest bottle of wine, something red and probably more expensive than most articles of clothing he owned. He didn’t have a corkscrew, so he caught the cork between his teeth, leaning back against the door and popping the bottle open, sipping it faster than he probably should have.

“Do you feel you are condemned, Will?”

“Trapped in the pantry of a serial killer while he sits on the other side of the door holding a kitchen knife?” Will laughed. “Well, I will admit, I’m not feeling particularly optimistic about the possible outcomes.”

“Despite my repeated assurances you that I do not wish you harm?”

Will took another long swallow of the wine, pressing his lips together as he considered his next words carefully. “No, you don’t want to *hurt* me, you want to… *possess* me, to keep me locked up in that room like a pet, something you can call on when it suits your needs. You want to warp me into something you want unrecognizable. Groom me into what you imagine I should be.”

“It’s not what I imagine you are, but rather what you are meant to become.”

“Yeah, well, maybe I don’t wanna *become* anything.” Will returned, swallowing down more wine, he had already consumed nearly a quarter of the bottle, and was feeling pleasantly warm with it. “Maybe I was just fine before I met you.”

“Hmm.”

Will sat in silence on the pantry floor, listening to the sound of Hannibal breathing through the door, and sipping away at the bottle in his hand. He wasn’t sure how long he stayed there -an hour, maybe three-, but eventually his eyelids grew heavy -both from the alcohol and the fact that he hadn't slept the previous evening- and, despite his best efforts, Will fell asleep, the second bottle of wine slipping from his hand, what little of its remained contents spilling across the floor, seeping across the hardwood and out through the crack under the door, a sweet, sickly bloodstain on the kitchen tiles.

Chapter End Notes

> And here y'all were, all worried that Will was giving up too easy. Don't worry friends, I know my boy better than I know myself.
>
> Side note, they don't touch on it much in the show, but those of you who've read Red Dragon likely know of Will's drinking problem, idk I just felt like including it here because it seemed fitting. Anyway, it's what I would do if I thought I was gonna die and was locked in a room full of wine tbh, so we can't blame him for that.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

> today my mom said that I should not be writing fanfic if I don't have a 90+ average, but here I am. I gotta get this shit outta my head somehow. Anyway, hope y'all like this one, I legit can't remember if it's been a while since I last updated or not, I've been so out of it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Will woke again there was silence on the other side of the door, daylight streaming in through the crack underneath. He frowned then, listening through the heavy wood of the pantry door, scarcely daring to breathe lest the sound distract him. He couldn't hear anything. He shifted, sitting up straighter, and his head spun, his blood was still running too slow, thinned by the alcohol. He crouched down, peering under the door, there was no shadow marking Hannibal's position, but that didn't necessarily mean he was in the clear.

He climbed to his feet, slowly easing open the door in order to peer through the opening. Nothing. Will slunk out the door and crept through the kitchen, blade in hand, eyes darting nervously back-and-forth as he slipped out into the hall. Still no sign of Hannibal. A relieved sort of calm washed over him, but through the cloud of alcohol still thrumming in his veins a voice whispered to be cautious, this whole thing seemed too good to be true.

Still he pushed on, desperation driving him forwards.

Will reached the living room unimpeded. He wondered if there was something he could used to smash a window, knock it open in order to make his way out into the street at the very least, if not draw some attention to the house. All he needed was for someone to call the cops, report a disturbance, then he could make enough noise when they came to the door that they'd find him.

If Hannibal didn't kill him first.

He stopped dead in his tracks when he saw the object sitting on the table, a phone, small and inexpensive, outdated even. Will lunged for it, grabbing it off the table, fingers shaking as he punched the familiar string of numbers into the keypad.

Will had always known some good would come from his ability to memorize numbers.

He raised the phone to his ear, ignoring the violent shaking of his hands as listened to the steady trill of the line connection, a silent prayer dancing across his tongue.

Hello, this is Jack Crawford, I can't come to the phone at the moment. Please leave your name and number and I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

“Fuck.” Will swore as the message tone rang in his ear. Of course he got the fucking voicemail. “Jack,” he said, his voice an urgent whisper, “It’s Will. I’m not sure where I am, Baltimore I think.” A pause. “I found him Jack, I found the Ripper. He’s a doctor, his name is-”

Before Will could finish his sentence there was a hand clamped over his mouth, a force pulling him abruptly backwards. The phone fell from his hand onto the floor, not yet hug up, and the hand moved from his mouth to grab hold of his throat. Will struggled, pulled his arm forwards, throwing the full-force of his weight into the elbow which he slammed into his assailant’s stomach.

Hannibal’s grip loosened and Will slipped his hold, whirling around, too fast it seemed, as he was still fuzzy from the wine. He stumbled backwards, heel hitting the phone, sending it skidding away under the couch. He held the blade of the kitchen knife aloft defensively as he faced off against Hannibal, holding his ground even as the room spun around him.

Hannibal was smiling, a small blade held at his side, curved, gleaming, deadly. “You look unsteady, Will.” There was something almost teasing under his tone. “Drink too much?”

“Fuck you!” Will retorted, it wasn’t the best possible response, but the adrenaline cutting through the wine and the sleep deprivation was making it a bit difficult for him to think straight. Which was probably the reason Will scarcely noticed Hannibal lunging for him until he was hitting the ground.

This time their altercation was short-lived with Hannibal quickly coming up victorious, given Will’s weakened state. Laying on his back, meeting Hannibal’s gaze, Will managed to maneuver one arm upwards, pressing the blade of his knife into Hannibal’s throat. He felt the sharp press of Hannibal’s blade against his abdomen. There was something strangely intimate about the position, eyes locked, each man at the mercy of the other.

Will looked up at the other man through his drunken stupor, and realized then that he couldn’t tell if he’d rather kiss Hannibal or kill him. He wasn’t sure if that thought was his own or if Hannibal had just wormed his way that deeply into Will’s mind.

He didn’t realize he’d spoken aloud until he saw something soften at the edges of Hannibal’s expression.

“Oh, Will,” Hannibal murmured softly, the pressure of his blade disappeared from Will’s stomach. His free hand rose to gently meet the knife at his throat, pulling it delicately from Will’s grip. Will let him; didn’t protest as the blade was taken from his hand and set beside him on the hardwood, as Hannibal gently cupped his cheek. “What am I going to do with you?” There was so much unbridled affection in his eyes, and Will found he couldn’t meet that gaze, instead shutting his eyes against the sudden onslaught of emotion. Hannibal shifted then, sitting back and pulling Will up into with him, placing a gentle kiss to his forehead.

Will squeezed his eyes shut, letting his head fall forward to rest in the cleft between Hannibal’s neck and shoulder. It felt so good to be held. Part of him was aware of how fucked up it was to find comfort in the very man who caused him such distress. And yet he couldn’t

bring himself to let go, tears springing up in his eyes as Hannibal clutched him against his chest, fingers stroking gently through his hair.

“Let’s get you to bed.” Hannibal murmured against the top of his head. “You’ll feel better after you’ve rested.”

Will allowed himself to be pulled to his feet and lead up the stairs, however it was as they got closer to his door that he began to panic. He didn’t want to go back; didn’t want to be locked up in that room again, alone in the dark where the creatures that lurked in his own mind lay in wait.

He stopped dead in his tracks.

“Something the matter?” Hannibal frowned at him.

Will stared at him for a long moment, lips pressed together. “I cant… I-” He shut his eyes, he sounded like an idiot. “Please don’t lock me in there alone again. I’m so fucking tired of being alone.”

Hannibal looked at him for a long time, then nodded. “Come with me.” He lead Will away down the hall and into a different bedroom, larger and equally well-decorated, more lived in than the one Will was accustomed to.

This must be Hannibal’s room.

“You may rest here if you wish, I will stay with you.” He discarded his coat and vest, folding them neatly and draping them over a nearby chair.

Will watched him, considered the dangers of the situation and realized, in his drunken, exhausted, self-destructive state, that he didn’t give a fuck. Instead he just climbed under the blanket, curling in on himself and squeezing his eyes tight shut.

Hannibal drew the blinds, filling the room with black before approaching the bed once more. He paused only a brief moment before crawling under the covers, sliding his body across the bed until he was pressed up against Will’s back. "Alright?" Will nodded. He was loathe to admit how touch-starved he was, how good the contact felt. He shifted back just a bit, increasing the contact between them, felt Hannibal tense against him for a moment, surprised, before settling once more, draping an arm over Will's waist. Will drifted off to the sound of Hannibal's breathing.

*****

Will dreamt of a cabin in the woods, dreamt he was sitting at a long table in front of a roaring fire. Across from him sat the skeletal black beast. Outside the stag roared, it’s great howls carried on the wind.

The beast smiled at him. Will did not smile back.

*****

Hannibal knew Will was dreaming by the way he twitched, the way he curled tighter in on himself, a small whimper emerging from deep in his throat.

Hannibal tightened his grip around Will, planting a soft kiss on the back of his neck. “Hush my darling.” He murmured, one thumb coming to smooth the creases from the other man’s brow. “No harm will come to you here. You’re safe.”

Will stirred only a moment longer, then drifted off into quiet sleep.

*****

Jack Crawford sat at his desk across from Alana Bloom and Beverly Katz, all staring at his phone in abject horror, none of them certain of what to say.

“That’s the message I received this morning, we couldn’t manage to get a trace on the line, but what we do know is that Will Graham is in the Baltimore area, and he’s alive, or at least he was at ten-thirty this morning.”

“That’s not all we know, Jack.” Alana said quietly. “We know that the Chesapeake Ripper is keeping Will alive, we just don’t know why.”

No one spoke then, none of them seeming to want to consider whatever horrors could be befalling their friend.

*****

Will woke warm and comfortable, safe even. He wondered at this sense of comfort in his semi-conscious state, shifting closer to the source of heat beside him. A chest rose and fell beneath his cheek and strong arms tightened around him.

His eyes shot open when he remembered the events of the previous evening and whose bed he had come to find himself in. He’d been so stupid; drunk and pliant, practically jumping at the opportunity to crawl into bed with a serial killer, worse than that, he was snuggled up to him, and could admit -at least to himself- that it was the best sleep he’d had in months.

God he was easy.

At least he hadn't fucked him. Lord knows he'd wanted to.

Will didn't want to wake up, he had to admit he was comfortable… content even, and he really didn't want to face the guilt rising up in his now sober gut. So for the moment he rolled closer, burying his face in Hannibal's neck and squeezing his eyes shut.

A low chuckle rumbled through Hannibal's chest at the movement, nimble fingers coming to stroke through his hair gently. "Good morning, Will."

Will sighed, lifting his head to meet Hannibal's gaze.

"Or should I say afternoon." His hair was mussed from sleep and pillow creases marked his cheek. He looked almost human like this.

"What time is it?" Will asked, not that it really mattered, time was so irrelevant in his current life, he didn't know why he still bothered to keep track of it.

Hannibal checked his watch. "Nearly half-past three."

Will sighed, he'd slept for far longer than he'd meant to. No matter. He was quiet for a long moment before he spoke again. "Didn't take much for you to get me right where you wanted me, did it?" There was no disguising the bitterness in his tone.

"You make it sound as though I manipulated you into my bed."

"Didn't you?" Will raised an eyebrow. "You may not have fucked me, but you certainly didn't let my impaired state go to waste."

"I merely offered comfort where comfort was due, in fact, I would go so far as to say you suggested it." Hannibal murmured, his fingers were still stroking gently over Will's hair.

He was right, Will knew that, but he was loathe to admit such a thing. "Of course, *comfort* ." He smiled bitterly. "You've managed to become a point of solace for the very distress you cause. An effective means of fostering dependency, Doctor."

"Any distress I cause you is not my intention." Hannibal murmured. "Although I imagine the distress you experienced last night was more your own doing than mine."

Will laughed at that, cold, sharp, bitter. "An escape attempt is a normal reaction to the distress caused by being held captive." He countered. "So it circles back to you." In his mind he wondered how many things in his life would circle back to Hannibal.

"You must consider, I didn't have a lot of options when you figured me out so quickly, Will." Hannibal paused. "Would you rather I had killed you then and there? Sliced you open and left you to bleed on my office floor?"

Will was quiet for a long time, then the words fell from his lips. "I'd rather I never met you." He tried to roll away then, but Hannibal caught him, arms tightening around his torso,

holding him in place. He shifted their position, rolling onto his side to face Will, close enough that their noses nearly brushed together.

“I really fucking hate you, you know that?” Will said, but there was no bite to the words, just resignation.

Hannibal met Will’s eyes for a long time, one hand resting on his cheek, thumb stroking slow circles over the skin there. “I know.” He murmured, close enough that Will could feel his breath.

Will’s hand trailed up Hannibal’s arm, over his shoulder, slowly moving to rest on his throat, his fingers twitched minutely as he thought of how easy it would be to just tighten his grip, to strangle Hannibal right here, he wondered if the other man would even bother to stop him. There was something beautifully intimate about the thought of strangling the man who had held him in his arms while he slept. Will didn’t like whatever part of himself these thoughts were coming from, but couldn’t seem to stop them nonetheless.

Hannibal frowned at him, eyes narrowing as thought registering exactly what was playing through Will’s mind. “Just yesterday you told me I had the eyes of a predator.” He said slowly. “Tell me, have you met your own gaze in the mirror as of late?”

Will said nothing, but his jaw twitched of its own volition, muscles tensing against Hannibal’s fingertips.

“What’s behind those eyes?” Hannibal continued, unperturbed by Will’s lack of response. “Are you thinking about killing me? Choking the life out of me right here in my own bed?”

Will’s top lip curled as he spoke his next words. He saw no sense in lying. “ *Yes*.”

Hannibal’s lips twitched with the barest hint of a smile. “Are we really so different then? If you would take such great pleasure in ending my life?”

“I’m justified in wanting you dead.” Will retorted. “What you do is different, you kill for the sake of it.”

“Hmm.” Hannibal smiled again, this time there was something decidedly darker about the expression. “If you were to strangle me, you’d be going about it wrong.” His words somehow managed to be both surprising and not.

“Well, you’re the expert.” Will replied. “Tell me, how would I go about strangling you the *right* way?”

Hannibal’s smile widened into a grin. “While an intimate manner of killing, strangulation tends to be difficult and ultimately impractical. Though I’m sure in your line of work you would have some knowledge of that.”

“Typically it’s drawn out.” Will murmured, an automatic response, something he’d lectured on in the past. “The amount of pressure exerted exhausts the killer’s hands, leaving multiple points of trauma, observed through ligature marks on the neck.” He paused, tongue darting

out to wet his lips. “The victim passes out, but strangulation must continue past that point to kill them. It’s a lot of work.”

“Easier, of course, to crush the windpipe, let the collapsed organ do the work for you.”

“Requires a lot of force.” Will replied.

“Less if you go about it correctly.” The hand on Will’s cheek shifted, trailing down his throat, thumb sliding into the hollow just beneath his Adam’s apple. “Right here,” he said, speaking so low that if anyone else had been in the room, his words would have been unclear to them, “is the weakest point in the throat. If one were to press down with the heel of a hand while constricting with the other, the necessary amount of force would be significantly lessened.” He spread his hand then, fingers splaying delicately across Will’s throat. “Though seeing one’s own handprint bruised into flesh is almost worth the less effective method.”

His words stirred something deep in Will’s gut. “We’ve caught people off hand spreads before.”

Hannibal smiled. “Not people like me.”

“I don’t think there’s anyone else like you.” Will said, and immediately regretted it. He acted on impulse then, throwing his weight into shifting their position, rolling Hannibal onto his back and hovering over him, his own hand coming to rest over Hannibal’s throat, easily finding the weak spot. “Here?” He raised an eyebrow, putting light, almost teasing pressure behind the heel of his hand.

Hannibal let out a breathless sort of laugh, lids hanging heavy over dark eyes. “You’re a fast learner, Will.” He licked his lips. “Though I’d hardly allow you to get much further than this.”

Will leaned closer then, so close that his breath ghosted over Hannibal’s lips. He knew the game now, knew how to get what he wanted. In the end, whatever little bit of power he could take back from Hannibal was enough for him. “Wouldn’t you?” He tightened his grip just a tiny bit, nails biting lightly into skin.

Hannibal's breath hitched a little at that, one of his hands came to rest on the back of Will's neck, tugging him just a bit closer. Their noses brushed.

They stared at each other for a long moment, neither quite willing to relent. Will hated the way he couldn’t keep his breath even, the way desire burned in his gut. He wanted to kill the little voice in his mind screaming at him to take, to possess, to *devour* the man beneath him. It was innate, primal, instinctual even, the longing to draw blood and leave bruises, to claim another human being as his own, to do harm where harm was due.

It felt just.

Will had never felt anything quite so powerful as what he felt right then, nor anything quite so violent.

“I believe it’s your move, Will.” Hannibal purred, an echo of Will’s own words during their encounter on the bathroom floor.

Will closed his eyes for a long moment, clenched his jaw. If he relented now, it would have bearings on future interactions, would hold drastic implications in his struggle to regain some sense of control. However if he continued this interaction, he ran the risk of losing control of himself again, of doing something as stupid as he had in the bathroom only days previous, if not worse.

"Testing boundaries?" Will asked, they were still so close, their lips nearly brushed as he spoke.

"Always." And then Hannibal brought their lips together in a kiss. It was a soft thing, tender, his fingers stroking slowly down the side of Will's cheek. Will leaned into it for a moment, felt warmth pool in his chest.

Then he squeezed Hannibal's throat as tight as he could. The hand in his hair tightened for a moment, tugging painfully before letting go, grabbing roughly at Will's wrists, nails biting into skin as he struggled to pull the hand away from his throat.

Will let go then, he’d made his point after all, and Hannibal let out a gasping sort of cough as he struggled to drag breath back into his lungs. Will rolled off him, sitting on the bed and watching him passively, one eyebrow raised, unable to quell the satisfaction that rose up in his chest of having won whatever power struggle had just occurred between them.

He glanced down then, watching the blood from the half-moon nail marks on his wrist drip down his arm and onto the clean linen sheets. The stain would be near impossible to get out.

Good.

After catching his breath, Hannibal stared at the blood painting his fingertips for a long moment, then glanced up at Will; he looked almost impressed. “You surprise me.” He said slowly, seeming, for once, at a loss for words.

Glad I’m not the only one. Will thought, he did not say this out loud. Instead he turned, throwing his legs over the side of the bed and saying the first thing which popped into his head, which was; “I’m hungry, make me eggs.”

He glanced over one shoulder to find Hannibal still watching him with an undisguised sort of fondness, one blood-stained finger lingering on his own lower lip. “Anything you wish.” He said, and Will knew he meant it.

*****

The strangest part of this whole affair was that Will found himself seated in the kitchen watching Hannibal cook. It was oddly soothing, the methodical way in which Hannibal

worked, perfectly at home in his kitchen, that grace with which he moved allowing Will to finally understand what people meant when they called cooking an art. He had to admit, it was nice to be out of his room, though he wondered just what served as motivation for Hannibal's decision not to lock him up. If anything, their interaction should have served to make him view Will as a threat.

After a long period of sitting in silence, Will was forced to break it. "You know, they'll trace the phone call." He said finally, unable to stop the grin which crept across his face.

Hannibal glanced over one shoulder at Will. "Alas, they will not." He turned back to the eggs. "It was a burner phone, one which I have disposed of by now."

Will frowned, mouth falling open as he considered what purpose this could possibly have served. "You left it for me to find." He said finally.

Hannibal nodded, turning back to what he was doing on the stovetop.

"You wanted me to call Jack… You wanted him to know I was alive, to wave me under his nose and snatch me away." He knew the answer to his next question before he even asked it. "Why?"

Hannibal turned then, holding the frying pan aloft as he carefully served the eggs onto two plates. "Why not?"

Will watched Hannibal intently as the man sat down across the island from him and started to eat. *Why not, indeed* . He wondered at the words as they echoed through his mind. How many things did Hannibal do simply for the thrill of knowing that he could? How much of this man was built around the idea that if a person was intelligent enough he could get away with anything.

Though he was loathe to admit it, Will found that there was something almost admirable in it, the complete and utter disregard for social and legal restrictions. *Why not?* Two words, and yet, two words were all that was needed to bring him that much closer to truly *understanding* Hannibal.

The problem, he realized, was that the closer he came to understanding Hannibal the more he grew to appreciate him. He briefly wondered what that said about him as a person, but quickly quelled the notion, pushing the thought to the back of his mind as he dug into his eggs.

As he raised his fork to his lips, Will saw the red crescent marks that Hannibal had left on his wrist, and he smiled.

Chapter End Notes

So.... yeah. It's 1 am, i'm kinda drunk...

That was fun. I'm trying to work with Will as an evolving character, I really hope it's translating well.

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

> I'm so sorry this took so long, please forgive me, April was exams month for me but I'm done school for the summer now so hopefully I'll be updating more frequently.
>
> Also I think I accidentally referenced Casino Royale twice in this chapter...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You were talking in your sleep last night.” Hannibal began, eyeing him curiously over the island.

“Hmm.” Will shovelled a forkful of egg into his mouth, not meeting Hannibal’s eye. “Say anything interesting?”

“Unintelligible mutterings mostly.” A pause. “What did you dream about?”

“I hardly think that’s your business, Doctor.” Will retorted. “Regardless of how much it gets you off to get inside my head, I still don’t want you in there.”

There was the light clank of metal on porcelain as Hannibal set his fork down. “Feeling uncooperative today?” He looked at Will, head tilted to one side in that avian manner he so often carried.

“Feeling uncooperative *every* day, it’s just usually overridden by a self-preservation instinct.” Will responded shortly.

“No instinct today?”

“Self-preservation is a fear response, and I’m not afraid of you anymore.” Will replied shortly.

“I never intended for you to fear me.”

Will laughed at that. “Of course you did, initially it was your only means of control, I can’t blame you for that.” He paused. “But you seemed to think that as you got closer to me I’d open up to you. Instead you surrendered your source of power.” He shrugged. “In fact, I’d go so far as to say we’re on even ground now, wouldn’t you?”

“And given this equal playing field, you choose a lack of cooperation?” He raised an eyebrow. “You are aware that a lack of cooperation on both parts means a stagnation in the relationship?”

“You need to give an inch to get one.” Will smirked as he sipped his coffee.

Hannibal’s breath hitched minutely at that, an involuntary gesture, something Will wondered if he was even aware of. “In the end, if neither of us cooperates, then neither of us reaps the benefits of our relationship.”

Will couldn’t help but chuckle at that. “Let’s be honest with each other, Dr. Lecter, no matter which way you flip it, there’s no way this works to my *benefit* . It’s all... varying degrees of detriment.”

“The path of least detriment, then?”

“The path of least detriment would be you letting me *go* .” Will retorted. “But I’m realistic, I know that’s not on the table.”

“What do you suggest?”

“A reasonable rate of return.” Will replied shortly. “You want information? Fine, ask away. But I have questions too, so for every answer I give, you owe me one back.”

Hannibal nodded thoughtfully. “A quid pro quo of a sort?”

“Call it what you like.” Will shrugged, leaning back in his chair, crossing his arms defensively over his chest. “So, do we have a deal?”

“You’ve peaked my interest.” Hannibal smiled. “I will play your game, on one condition.”

“Name it.”

“I think we’ve moved past the professionalism of titles. I would much rather we were on a first name basis."

“One could go so far as to call you *desperate*." Will put deliberate emphasis on the word. He knew it was childish to try to piss Hannibal off, but he couldn’t help himself really.

Hannibal just *looked* at him, head cocked to one side, passive, waiting.

“Fine.” Will said. “Okay, *Hannibal* , would you like to go first, or shall I?”

There was no ignoring the smugness in Hannibal’s expression, pleased at the use of his name, it was only the second time Will had used it. “It’s your game Will, so by all means, you begin.”

“Alright.” Will paused, considering his next words carefully. “Why did you let me choke you? I could have killed you, why risk it?”

Hannibal was quiet for a long moment, pressing his lips together before he finally spoke. “I genuinely didn’t think you would get that far.” He admitted. “I underestimated you.” He seemed remarkably pleased about this, considering.

“Most people do.” Will replied. “Your turn.”

“This dream you’ve been having, would you describe it for me?”

“It’s not recurring, more… *continuous* .” Will sighed, taking a moment to explain the dreams which had been plaguing him since his arrival. He didn’t meet Hannibal’s eye as he spoke, couldn’t admit that the second beast in his tale bore the face of the man now sitting across from him.

“Trapped between two evils…” Hannibal murmured. “Dreams often serve as a mean by which our minds can tell us the things we need to know. Representations of our reality.”

“Wording questions as statements isn’t going to get you more answers.” Will grumbled. “My turn?”

“Ask away.”

“Did you enjoy it? My hands around your throat? The look in my eye that said I just might go through with it?” He put heavy emphasis on the words, wanting to coax some sort of reaction out of Hannibal, who had been hardly more than stoic up to this point.

Hannibal licked his lips, slowly, thoughtfully. “Yes.” He said, and that single word managed to send a shiver down Will’s spine. “Did you?”

“If I answer that, it counts as your question.”

“I accept the repercussions.” Hannibal all but purred, not once tearing his eyes from Will’s face, seeming to want to drink in every twitch in his expression. “Answer it.”

Will bit the inside of his cheek, lifting his eyes to meet Hannibal’s gaze directly. “I liked the thought of killing you.” His voice was scarcely more than a whisper. “And I liked knowing you’d let me.”

“I didn’t let you.” Hannibal replied curtly. “I stopped you.”

“No, *I* stopped me.” Will clenched his jaw. “You were preoccupied.”

“Not that you seemed to mind much.” He smiled like a cat. “Your question.”

“Was fucking me always your goal or did that come as a surprise to you as well?”

Hannibal started just a bit at the bluntness of the question, and Will himself feeling more than a little smug at that. “A crass way of asking.” Hannibal replied. “But effective.”

“Just shut up and answer it.”

“Impatient are we?” Hannibal’s eyes darkened with mischief. “No. Sex with you was not always my goal. While I found you attractive I didn’t consider it a viable possibility until I saw how you responded to my proximity.”

Will frowned at that, confused by the redirection of blame onto him.

Hannibal seemed satisfied with his speechlessness. “You admit you enjoyed your experience this morning.” He paused, his body leaning forwards minutely, something almost imperceptible if one weren’t so observant as Will. “Tell me, would you relive it?”

Will felt his breath hitch involuntarily at the words, his grip on his own arm tightened, nails biting into his bicep. “Would… I… relive it?” Will took his time, drawing out each word in the sentence. “Depends. Would you let me kill you?”

“A question isn't an answer, dear. You’re stalling.” The term of endearment sent a pleasant feeling down Will's spine.

“You’re asking circumstantial questions.” He paused. “Makes it hard to give a definitive answer. I suppose it’s possible, yes. Though under current circumstances… no, I wouldn’t let you get that far again. And you did promise to respect my wishes.” Will couldn’t be certain it was the truth, but what he was a certain of was that at the very least Hannibal would avoid touching him if he thought that was what Will wanted, and it made self-control one less thing for Will to have to worry about.

“So I did.”

“My turn?”

“If you wish.” Hannibal responded. “We may also break now.”

“Game a bit too intense for you, Doct-” He stopped himself as he remembered the rules of their game, cleared his throat, corrected. “ *Hannibal* .”

“That’s better.” Hannibal let the words linger on his lips just a bit too long before he slid out of his chair, shifting gracefully into a standing position. “No, not too intense. Though time to more thoroughly consider my line of questions wouldn’t go amiss.”

“Fair point.”

“I need to wash these.” Hannibal said shortly, gesturing to the now forgotten dishes which lay on the table between them. “You may stay, or you may return to one of the bedrooms. It’s your decision.”

One of the bedrooms. The sentence echoed in his mind, Hannibal had worded it like that intentionally, wanted Will to know he had the option of sliding back between Hannibal’s sheets if he was so inclined. He *wanted* him to think about it. And fuck if he wasn’t *thinking* about it. Will clenched his jaw. “I think I’ll be locked up in my room again if that’s all the same to you.”

Hannibal nodded and lead him up the stairs.

*****

Freddie Lounds sat at her desk staring at a blank word document on her laptop, her brow furrowed deeply. Her visit to the home of Will Graham had proved fruitless and she was getting to be quite frustrated, investigative journalism was really only an interesting career when you actually *found* something to write about.

Her phone rang and she nearly jumped out of her skin, taking a deep breath before reaching to answer it. “Lounds.” She said shortly.

She was silent for a moment, listening to the voice through the other end of the line.

“No shit, really?” She grinned. “Well, fuck me!”

Another pause, chatter on the line, Freddie scribbled something down in her notebook.

“God, I could kiss you!” Freddie said, and then hung up. She hummed to herself as she closed her laptop. It looked like her luck was about to change after all.

*****

Once alone in the room, door locked securely behind him, Will slumped back against the wood, squeezing his eyes shut for a long moment. He could still feel Hannibal’s gaze burning heavy on his flesh, still hear the echoes of the man’s subtle offer to lock Will back in his own room rather than the spare one. And wasn’t that just what Hannibal wanted? To come back to his bed after a long day and find Will already waiting between his sheets? Like the mistress to a supervillain in a particularly campy spy film.

Will swore then, thumping his head back against the door. His hands were balled into fists, nails biting roughly into his own palms. The least Hannibal could do was try and *hide* the fact that he wanted Will as badly as he did. It was only polite, especially given the circumstances. But Hannibal Lecter didn’t care, he didn’t have to, not here. No, in this place, the game might be Will’s but all the rules were Hannibal’s to bend as he saw fit.

And fuck it if that didn’t make the whole thing that much more thrilling.

His mind brought forth the image of how Hannibal had looked at him across the table, hunger clear in his eyes, like he wanted to spread Will across the little island in his kitchen right then and there.

Will felt heat stir low in his gut at that.

He shook it off, walked over to the bed and grabbed the first book he could reach, propping it open on his knee. Dante. He couldn’t say he was surprised. His eyes swept over the pages, a pathetic attempt at quelling his racing mind.

He could still smell Hannibal on his shirt, still feel him on his skin.

He focused on the words on the page, squinted until his head started to ache, made it for close to half an hour before he realized he'd been reading the same sentence over-and-over again, his mind reaching into places he was certain would earn him a spot in the very inferno laying open on his thigh.

He shut the book and started to pace, long strokes up and down the length of the room, speed increasing until he started to grow dizzy from it. Will sat down again, but his leg tapped on the floor, a nervous staccato beat against the oriental print rug.

He wasn't used to discomfort in solitude, and found that the feeling unsettled him; his mind clutching to the hyper-awareness that downstairs Hannibal Lecter was washing the dishes from their shared breakfast, his neck bearing the bruises left by Will's hands. He glanced at his wrist, ran his fingers over the already scabbing marks from where Hannibal's nails had broken his skin. There was still drying blood there, a deep maroon that matched the colour of Hannibal's eyes, and Will found himself scratching at it until one of the cuts re-opened, a small pinprick of blood welling up over his skin. He brought his arm up to his face then, subconsciously sucking the blood into his mouth.

Will flopped back on the bed, one arm out at his side, the other hand coming to pinch the bridge of his nose as swallowed, washing the taste of copper from his mouth. God his head hurt. Perhaps the wine had been a bad idea after all. He shifted, rolling onto his side, wondering if he could sleep through the remaining time until dinner. It was five-thirty, Hannibal usually brought his evening meal around six-forty-five, though Will did wonder if circumstances meant said meal would be later than usual. He doubted it, if there was one thing Hannibal Lecter was consistent about, it was his schedule.

Will sighed. He wondered how much time he could kill waiting if he worked out. It made sense, he couldn't let captivity be an excuse to fall out of shape after all.

He worked out until every muscle ached, until sweat dripped from his skin and his heart pounded in his chest, then he stopped. He'd managed to kill an hour, he figured he'd take a quick shower before dinner to get the smell of sweat off his skin.

Standing shirtless in front of the bathroom mirror, Will stared at himself, brow furrowed deeply.

Time had faded the bruises some, let the stubble begin to spring back up on his cheek, a shadow of what it was, but still something more than the smooth expanse of before. He still didn't quite look like himself, but he looked closer to himself than he had, a version of himself with a shadowed gaze and a twisted smile, but at least something he could recognize.

He straightened and turned on the shower, catching a glimpse of the nail marks on his wrists as he did. Hannibal would bring dinner soon, and Will would rather be dressed by the time he got there.

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Hannibal entered the spare bedroom at exactly six-forty-five as always, he was perturbed by the sensation in his gut, a fluttering sort of anticipation at the thought of continuing his earlier conversation with Will. He'd go so far as to call it nervousness, except that Hannibal Lecter did not get *nervous.* Then again, there was no predicting what he would feel when it came to Will, and he had to admit the unpredictability of it was thrilling.

Will wasn't in the room, but the bathroom door was closed, and a deep breath brought the smell of steam and soap to Hannibal's nose, a sign that Will had likely just stepped out of the shower. Hannibal closed the door and deposited the food tray on the table, hesitating for a moment before tucking his hands neatly into the pockets of his suit pants.

Will stepped out of the bathroom two minutes later, nearly jumping out of his skin at the sight of Hannibal sitting there. "Christ!" He hissed. "I should get you a bell or something."

Hannibal arched an eyebrow, feigning disinterest through amusement. Will was still only halfway through buttoning his shirt, and water plastered his hair to his neck, running in rivulets down the bare expanse of his chest. Hannibal couldn't help the way his breath hitched just a bit in his throat, he was finding more and more that there were so many things beyond his control where Will Graham was concerned. His hands twitched in his pockets, desperate to reach out and touch, to pull Will flush against him, run his fingers over his skin.

"You're staring again, Hannibal." Will chided, and Hannibal felt a pleasant sort of shiver run through him at the use of his name. Will's hands slid up to fasten the remainder of his buttons, leaving just the top two open.

"Hard to avoid." Hannibal replied smoothly.

"You who exercises control in all things can't do it now?" Will raised an eyebrow. "Flattered to know I have that effect."

It was a clever jibe to be sure. What Will didn't realize however, was just how much self-control it actually took for Hannibal to keep his hands to himself. He was a patient man, or so he told himself again and again in recent weeks, but it was difficult, his constant proximity to the Will beginning to drive him up the wall, so desperate to touch, to feel, even just the brush of a shoulder would be enough at this point. The experience of Will sleeping in his arms had surprised him, merely in how profoundly it had affected him, he'd never found much comfort in such casual intimacy before.

How could he be patient when Will had dreamt so prettily, curled so sweetly into his touch, letting himself be held closer, letting his guard down around Hannibal in a way that he couldn't while he was waking. How could he be patient when the memory of Will looming over him, hands around his throat and fire in his eyes, sat so fresh in his mind.

It frustrated him, this complete loss of control where Will was concerned; it was all too easy to lose track of himself in the way his pulse raced, in the way his fingers twitched, palms

itching with the need to touch. It was all too easy to surrender control to Will, to give him whatever he wanted without so much as a second thought. He thought of the bruises on his own neck and clenched his hand in his pockets to keep from running his fingers over them. He'd admired them in the mirror earlier, liked the way the blood bloomed so dark beneath the skin, revelled in the memory of Will's strong grip, his steady, determined hand.

There had been something so beautifully violent about the look in Will's eye, though he imagined he'd admire it more were it not directed at him.

"Would you like to continue our game over dinner, Will?"

"Of course." Will towelled off his hair, leaving his curls sticking up at odd, messy angles, his dishevelled appearance was disarming, making some odd warmth pool in Hannibal's chest. He tossed the towel onto the bed before flopping unceremoniously down into his chair. Hannibal watched him, raised an eyebrow at the disastrous manner in which he conducted himself, but said nothing. He popped the button on his jacket before sitting across the table from Will, crossing one leg neatly over the other.

The wet towel would leave a damp spot. It would make the sheets smell. Hannibal said nothing.

"It is still your turn." Hannibal said after a beat.

Will glanced down at the food tray then back up at Hannibal. "No whiskey?" He raised an eyebrow. "You always bring me whiskey with dinner." He was stalling, he hadn't used his time to think of questions. Hannibal hid a smile at the knowledge that he had the upper hand.

"You drank your way through well over six hundred dollars worth of wine before eleven this morning. I thought it prudent not to provide you with more alcohol."

"What? The bottles they have at the grocery store for $11.95 not to your taste?"

Hannibal couldn't help but wince at the statement.

Will laughed at him, throwing his head back, baring his neck.

"You're mocking me." Hannibal said.

"I guess I am, yeah." Will frowned, seeming to realize the thing which Hannibal had the good sense not to voice, that playful taunts were a sign of familiarity. Will was becoming more comfortable with him. He paused, then straightened in his chair. "My question then. You've mentioned knowing about Hobbs… How long have you been keeping tabs on me?"

Hannibal's fingers twitched again, and he folded his stubborn hands in his lap, pushing the thought of his fingers tangled in dark curls to the back of his mind. "Garrett Jacob Hobbs interested me, I appreciated his work, much in the way a master appreciates that of a novice." He began carefully. "When he was caught, my interest was peaked, in my research I stumbled across an article which mentioned you by name as well as your unique skill set, though I think the word choice was a bit more colourful than that."

Will shook his head, seemingly in disbelief. “I know the article.” He sighed. “Though I didn’t take you as the sort to frequent *TattleCrime.com* .”

“I don’t.” Hannibal replied. “Ms. Lounds has a nasty habit of distorting the truth… When she’s not lying outright.” He shrugged. “Still, I must admit I was enthralled. From a psychiatric standpoint, a mind such as yours is a rare find indeed. I wondered at how far your claim could be pushed. Could it really be possible to empathize with anyone?”

“Sounds like the beginnings of an obsession to me.” Will griped. “But what do I know? I’m no psychiatrist.”

Hannibal didn’t respond to the jibe. He wasn’t obsessed with Will, didn’t appreciate the suggestion that he was. Instead he shrugged it off. “The monsters in your dreams, have you given any thought to what they represent?”

Will sighed. “Two facets of the same evil, I imagine.” He paused. “One is directly hunting me, driving me towards the other. The latter offers solace from the prior, but it’s not comforting, it’s… uneasy.”

“You think these dreams are about me?” The notion set some strange thrill through Hannibal.

“Not everything is about you, Hannibal.” Will retorted.

“A redirection is an answer in itself.” A smirk.

“So what? You read about me in a Freddie Lounds article and decide ‘hmm, he seems interesting, I’d like to keep him as a pet so I can poke him in the brain whenever I’m feeling up for it’?”

“That’s a bit dramatic, don’t you think?”

“Is it?” Will cocked his head to one side. “Doesn’t matter anyway, I think the least you could do at this point is allow me my theatrics.”

Another shot, Will was in a confrontational mood today it seemed, pushing his limits, testing how much Hannibal would let him get away with. Hannibal sighed. “After the Hobbs incident I was curious, I researched you, found out what I could.” A pause. “Your name is commonly thrown around in psychiatric circles.” Another pause as Hannibal weighed his next words carefully. “But no, while I did harbour desire to meet you, this,” he gestured around them, “was never my plan, rather an unfortunate result of desperation.”

Will frowned. “You’re telling the truth.” He said after a moment.

“Of course.” Hannibal smiled in reply. “Are you surprised?”

“A little bit.” He paused. “You suppose the fact that the consequences were unintended makes it better?”

“Doesn’t it?”

“I suppose that depends on what school of morality you subscribe to.” Will shook his head. “Not that I imagine that matters much to you.”

“My intention was never to imprison you, rather I wanted to know you, to befriend you.”

“You wanted to see if I could understand you, but you never expected me to catch on as quick as I did.” It wasn’t a question, so Hannibal didn’t bother to answer. Will was right, Will read him like an open book, it was both disturbing and enticing in equal measure. “In your head that left you no choice but to kill me or put me somewhere I couldn’t tell anyone what I knew.”

“You’ve admitted that you liked killing Hobbs, that you revel in the notion of killing me…” A pause. “Tell me, would you kill again?”

“I’d kill you.” Will replied. “But I imagine that’s not what you had in mind.”

“No, but it’s a start.” Hannibal couldn’t ignore the warmth that pooled in his gut at the predatory look in Will’s eye. “Doing bad things to bad people makes you feel good. That’s your pathology.”

“I’m not *pathological* .” Will practically spat the word. “I killed one man in self defense, I can’t have a pathology without having a pattern.”

“No, I suppose not.” Hannibal licked his lips, in his mind he saw what Will could become if he only gave into that aspect of himself, blood-soaked, wild-eyed. *Beautiful* .

“My turn?” Will raised an eyebrow.

“By all means.” Hannibal watched Will take another bite of his food, the way his lips wrapped around his fork, the way his throat bobbed when he swallowed.

“Would you want to watch? Is that why you keep asking whether or not I’d kill again? Because you want to see it happen?” Will’s tongue darted out to wet his lips, and Hannibal couldn't deny the way his eyes were drawn to the gesture.

“ *Yes.* ” Hannibal couldn’t help the way he leaned forwards in his chair. “I’ve seen the look in your eyes when your hands are wrapped around my throat, I cannot help but wonder how beautiful you would be to draw blood.”

“Give me a knife and I’ll show you.”

Hannibal chuckled at that. “You’re funny, Will.”

“Not an adjective people usually use to describe me.”

Hannibal shrugged. “Perhaps they merely do not understand your sense of humour.”

“Well, I’ve heard it said that true genius often goes unappreciated.” Will said shortly. “You gonna ask your question?”

“In lieu of a question, I have a suggestion.”

“Oh this should be interesting.” Will tilted his head to one side, watching Hannibal curiously. “By all means.”

“Our meal today was quite amicable, I saw no problems with sharing space with you, I wonder if you’d prefer that to our current arrangement.”

“What are you suggesting?” Will raised an eyebrow. “Because it’s not that you’re gonna leave the door unlocked and let me wander around as I please.” A pause. “No, you’re not that stupid. You’d have me follow you from room-to-room as you go about your day. You’d have me as a dog on your heels.” He shook his head. “Is that supposed to be better for me?”

“Isn’t it?”

There was a moment’s hesitation on Will’s face, and Hannibal’s lips quirked. Will was starting to see things his way, could agree with him even, only needed a push.

“It was merely a suggestion. One I thought you would prefer to your solitude.” He straightened, pushing his chair back from the table, standing as if to conclude their conversation. “But if you would rather remain here on your own…”

Will frowned, pursed his lips and narrowed his eyes, before sighing as he finally came to a decision.

“Wait.”

“Yes?” Hannibal glanced at him, expression smooth, passive, even as on the inside he couldn’t help but be pleased with himself. This push-and-pull between them seemed composed almost entirely of small victories, and while he’d lost their earlier battle, this win was his own.

“Fine. I’ll play your game.” Will replied, sounding passive, if a bit resigned. “Since you were so obliging as to play mine.”

“There’s no shame in admitting you enjoy my company.” Hannibal said shortly.

“It’s not about your company, you’ve just made it so that you’re the only company around.” Will paused. “Solitude can drive a man to madness.”

“Especially a man with a mind so colourful as yours.” Hannibal approached the door, glancing back over one shoulder. “Coming?”

Will stood and followed him silently out the door.

*****

Freddie Lounds found Alana making her way out of the FBI headquarters, her voice coming suddenly, causing Alana to nearly jump out of her skin.

“Alana Bloom, imagine my luck, running into you here.”

"Freddie Lounds, I wish I could say the same.” Alana retorted, glancing sideways at the smiling red-headed reporter. “What do you want?”

“Just trying to corroborate a rumour I heard.” She picked up pace, matching Alana’s stride step-for-step.

“I’m not telling you anything, Lounds.”

“All I need is a yes or a no.” Freddie cut her off, shoving a tape recorder under her nose. “Is it true that the FBI recently received communication from special agent Graham, proving that he’s being held captive by the Chesapeake Ripper?”

Alana couldn’t stop her eyes from widening at that. “How did you-”

“So it is true.” Freddie grinned her megawatt smile. “My god that’s *brilliant*. Care to comment?”

Alana had no idea what to say, instead simply pushed past Freddie to get to her car, where she sat for a long moment, pressing her lips together and squeezing her eyes shut before pulling out her phone and calling Jack Crawford.

*****

While their arrangement was a bit of an odd one, Will found that, ultimately, it was better than his previous situation. Hannibal’s house was enormous, though he hardly allowed Will to access all of the rooms, mostly Will saw the rooms Hannibal spent the most time in. He sat at the dining room table while he watched Hannibal take clippings from the herbs he grew there. He reclined lazily against the kitchen counter while Hannibal prepared meals in that lovely and artistic manner he had. He stretched himself off on the couch in Hannibal’s study while Hannibal read or cross reference patient notes or whatever it was he did.

It was certainly strange certainly, but surprisingly calming and he quickly found himself falling comfortably into the lull of routine. Their game continued, each asking the questions on their mind that day, answering accordingly, sharing meals, Will returning to his own room at night or when Hannibal had to go out.

He was comfortable, too comfortable perhaps, something he realized one afternoon, laying on the couch in Hannibal’s living room, while the other man composed something on his harpsichord. Will rolled over, opening an eye and watching Hannibal. He was so focused, large hands spread across the keys, pausing to scratch another note onto the page in front of him before continuing. Will smiled as he watched and was struck by how domestic the entire

affair was. The realization was a startling one, and one he didn't have time to really consider before Hannibal was turning to catch his eye, lips curled in a slight smile.

"You know it's rude to stare, Will." He said softly, fingers pausing over the keys.

"I wasn't." Will protested, eyes still trailing over Hannibal's form, taking in the grace with which he sat at the piano bench.

"I thought we had agreed not to lie to one another."

Will sighed, relenting. "You looked peaceful, focused. It's…" He wasn't sure what he wanted to say.

"Yes?" Hannibal arched an eyebrow.

"Never mind." Will dropped his gaze to the floor, shifting to roll onto his back.

"Have you ever played?" Hannibal asked, and Will raised his gaze to meet his eye once more.

"A bit of piano when I was a kid." Will said, recalling the piano which Mrs. Lewis, the elderly widow who had lived next door to him and his father for a short while, kept in her living room. "Not much more than *Mary Had a Little Lamb* ."

Hannibal chuckled at that. "Would you like to play now?"

"Never played a harpsichord." Will said, pushing himself up into a sitting position. "Never met anyone who was pretentious enough to *own* one… Before you that is."

"There is nothing wrong with a little pretentiousness now and again." Hannibal smirked, ignoring the jibe. "And it does have a distinct sound which I prefer to that of the piano."

"Yeah well, you would say that." Will grumbled.

"It's the same principle." Hannibal insisted. "Come. Sit with me."

Will sighed. "You really aren't gonna take no for an answer, are you?"

"You have the ability to decline anything I ask of you, Will." Hannibal said smoothly, pouring every inch of charm he had into his smile. "Still, I would like it if you'd sit with me."

Will deliberated, but really only long enough to provide a sufficient image of conflictedness before he sighed. "Fine." He stood up, crossing the short distance between himself and Hannibal.

Hannibal shifted, making space for Will to sit beside him on the bench. Will slid into place without protest, his thigh brushed against Hannibal's, the first contact between them in nine days. Will was loathe to admit he'd been counting. "I don't even remember what keys to start on." He griped, though both men seemed aware that he was only putting up a fight for show.

Hannibal made a small sound, as if in attempt to stifle a laugh then reached up, placing Will's left hand near the center of the keyboard, arm snaking around the back of him to reach his right.

"I can't help but feel you had an ulterior motive to this." Will grumbled, his fingers skimming the keys, muscles automatically remembering the song he'd been so proud of himself for memorizing as a kid.

"Perhaps." Hannibal murmured, his breath ghosted over the shell of Will's ear as he spoke. "Am I really that transparent?"

"Everyone's transparent to me." Will replied, every muscle in his body ached to lean into Hannibal, to lean into the warmth of human contact*, any* human contact. "Although you're not really making an effort to hide it."

"Would you rather I lied to you?"

"No." He said, and that seemed to be the right answer because Hannibal pressed closer. "Honesty is better, I know what I've got myself into that way."

"Mmm." Hannibal hummed. It would be so easy to kiss him right now, all Will needed to do was turn his head. He swallowed, focusing on the keys beneath his fingers as he played his way through the familiar, childish tune.

"I never learned the notes, you know." He muttered. "Just numbered my fingers and remembered it that way."

"Not particularly musically inclined?" The words rumbled along the side of Will's neck.

"Never got much chance to be." Will sighed.

Hannibal's hands slid over Will's arms, fingers stroking delicately over the bones of his wrists for a brief moment before he pulled Will's hands away from the keys, replacing them with his own. He started playing through the composition he'd been working on before, something eerie and sad.

"So we've discerned you had no inclination for music, tell me, what did you enjoy as a child?"

Will sighed. By this point he had grown accustomed to Hannibal's habit of suddenly changing the subject. "We moved around a lot so I really didn't have much time for extra-curriculars, read a lot, kept my grades up, stated working as soon as I was old enough to get hired…" He shrugged. "It's not a particularly interesting story."

"No, I suppose you wouldn't think so."

"What about you? What was your childhood like?" Will couldn't help the curiosity which painted his tone.

“Privileged, then filled with hardship, and then privileged again.” Hannibal replied, cryptic as always. “Though by the time the hardship had ended, the damage had already been done.”

“I’m curious as to what happened to you to make you the way you are.” Will admitted.

Hannibal said nothing, and Will imagined that that was likely the most he would get from Hannibal, at least for the moment. So instead of pressing further he merely closed his eyes, letting the music wash over him, enjoying the warmth of Hannibal where they were pressed together. Eventually Hannibal stopped playing altogether, wrapping his arms around Will’s middle, face pressed into the side of his neck, breathing him in.

It wasn’t sexual, but it was intimate in it’s own way, and Will leaned into him, his own hand sliding up into Hannibal’s hair, fingers winding their way through the soft strands.

Hannibal sighed contentedly against the side of his neck, one hand rising up to cup Will’s cheek, turning his head to face him. He leaned closer, so close that their foreheads nearly brushed, and for a moment Will wondered if Hannibal was going to try to kiss him again.

"This... what we're doing now, it isn't-" Will fumbled for the right words. "It's not-"

“If you’re trying to tell me it isn’t a gesture of affection towards me, but rather a means by which to comfort yourself, I am aware.” He paused. “I’m not delusional, Will, I understand your feelings towards me, just as I understand that a person in a situation as distressing as yours will gravitate towards the sole source of comfort in their life. In your case, that is me.”

"Good." Will surprised himself then by closing the gap between them, there lips met, and for a moment Hannibal stiffened, as if in surprise. But then his hand came up to cup Will's cheek and he kissed him back and it was softer than Will had expected. Hannibal kissed him like he was afraid Will would vanish into thin air if he held too tight. Will pulled him closer, deepened the kiss, their tongues brushed, and Hannibal hummed against his lips, one hand tightening in his hair. Will found that his hands shook when they broke apart again, and he rested his face in the crook of Hannibal's shoulder.

“You know this ends one of three ways, right?” Will said quietly, not sure where the words came from. “I kill you, you kill me, or one way or another you’re caught and I move on with my life.”

“I’m aware.” Hannibal replied. “I want you to know that I will not kill you unless you leave me no choice but to do so.”

“Is that supposed to reassure me?”

“Doesn’t it?”

Will was silent for a moment, not wanting to admit that it did. “I still don’t get it.” He said finally.

“Get what?”

“Why you decided to keep me here.” He said shortly. “It doesn’t make sense, you’ve never done anything that stupid before.” Will paused. “Unless you have, in which case I’m *definitely* not going to survive this.”

Hannibal actually laughed at that. “I assure you, you are the first.”

“Not sure if that makes it better or worse.” He met Hannibal's gaze again. "Worse I think."

There was too much tenderness in Hannibal's gaze, his touch was too gentle, too kind, to difficult to reconcile with the monster Will knew him to be.

"Stop looking at me like that."

"Like what?"

Like you love me. His brain supplied, but he didn't say it. Instead he pulled Hannibal into another kiss, this one more heated than the previous. They clutched each other, kissing for a long time on the piano bench. Hannibal's fingers dug into Will's shoulder, holding him close. His teeth scraped across Will's lower lip, and Will couldn't stop the little moan that slipped from his throat.

They stayed like that for a long time, kissing tenderly, hands slowly tracing over the edges of each other, learning each curve. Will discovered the way Hannibal gasped when he scraped his nails lightly over his scalp, Hannibal found the way Will would press into the kiss just a little harder whenever he stroked his fingers across the bottom of his jaw. When Hannibal's lips moved down the side of his neck, catching skin between his teeth, Will tightened a hand in Hannibal's hair, holding him close. It would leave a mark, certainly, but it didn't matter. No one would see him but the man who put it there in the first place. He moaned a little and felt Hannibal smile against his skin. "My Will," he whispered against his skin. "Tell me what you need and I will give it to you."

Will stiffened at that, suddenly overwhelmed by a sort of nervous fluttering, the feeling that he was trapped. In that moment he wanted to put as much distance between Hannibal and himself as he could. “I’m not.” He said, pulling Hannibal away from his neck.

“Not what?”

“Yours.” Will leaned back some. “I mean sure, you can keep me here against my will, you’ve proven that, but you don’t *own* me.”

"I only meant-”

“I know what you meant.” Will stood from the bench, turned to face away, he couldn't meet Hannibal's eyes in this moment.

“I really can’t lie to you, can I?” Hannibal followed Will even as he pulled away, his arms twining around Will’s torso, his lips pressing against the back of his neck. “You cannot ask me to be honest with you and then be angry when I state my desires plainly.”

“I’m not angry at you for being *honest* , Hannibal.” Will growled. “I’m angry at all of this, I’m angry that I’m in this whole mess, and I’m angry that I got kidnapped, and I’m angry that the *serial killer* who kidnapped me is acting like I’m his fucking boyfriend!” He was shouting now, and Hannibal still wasn’t letting go, kept holding onto him, pressed a kiss to the side of his neck.

“You’re right, I’m sorry.”

Will responded by jabbing an elbow back into Hannibal’s ribs. “Just get the fuck off me.” He said, his tone one of resignation. Hannibal did let him go this time, and Will crossed the room, moving to lean on a pillar a short ways away.

“Will…” Hannibal began watching him intensely from his place on the couch.

“Just… *don’t* .” Will pressed his face into his hand, tugging at the skin around his eyes. “I’m going to my room, feel free to lock me in whenever’s most convenient for you."

He stormed out of the room without looking back, feeling, in that moment, disgusted with himself.

Chapter End Notes

I want y'all to know I read (and then re-read) all of your comments, and do take them into account, so keep up the good work, those of you that comment, I love you all so much.

Also, sorry if this chapter was underwhelming, idk I feel like there's something slightly off about it... I couldn't quite get these two to behave themselves and just do what I ask them to, but I suppose that's the way it goes. After all, it's hard to make things progress slowly when Hannibal is such a thirsty motherfucker.

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

> Again, sorry it took so long, I re-plotted this chapter like eight times because I wasn't sure what direction I wanted to go in...
>
> Hope y'all enjoy, love you all to death.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will lay on the bed, eyes squeezed shut, nails biting into the skin of his own palm, head steadily thumping back against the pillow as he struggled to clear away the memory of Hannibal's body pressed against him. Fuck, he still *smelled* like Hannibal, the bruise on his neck throbbed and he rubbed at it, pressed his face into the collar of his own sweater and inhaled deeply, savouring the remnants of Hannibal's cologne.

"Fuck." He swore, slamming his head back into the pillow once more. "Shit, god fucking-"

There was the click of the lock falling into place from outside the door and Will fell silent.

He sat up, waiting, barely daring to breathe as he listened for the footsteps to disappear. A minute passed and he heard nothing. Will rose from the bed and crept across the rug, ducking low and peering through the gap under the door. He saw the shadowed outlines of feet and knew Hannibal was still standing there, listening, though for what Will didn't know. He stayed there for what felt like an eternity, watching Hannibal's feet beneath the door, until the other man finally walked away, shoes clicking on the hardwood as he went.

Will stayed there for a long moment, not daring to move, then he stood, crossing the room back in the direction of the bed Will switched off the light and crawled under the covers. He didn't much care about dinner, right now he just wanted to sleep away his problems.

It didn't take long after he closed his eyes for Will to drift off into an uneasy sleep.

*****

Will stood before the fire and stared into the flames, the flickering light casting dark, eerie shadows over his face, he didn't hear the beast come up behind him, only felt its arms slide tight around his middle. One clawed hand slid up over his neck, curved around the side of his jaw, it was cold to the touch, like ice against his flesh, and Will shuddered, flinching away from the contact.

As he tried to pull away the beast held him tighter, one of its claws biting into the flesh of his cheek, sharp as a razor, slicing through skin. Will cried out, tried to pull away more forcefully, but the claws bit into his stomach, ripping through skin and muscle like tissue paper. Blood welled up from his wound, and Will looked down to find that it was black, the same colourless void as the creature which clung to him so tightly, and instead of dripping down onto the floor the blood spread across his skin, staining it. He yanked harder, desperately trying to break contact, but found the hand that had been on his face scraping down his neck, and over his chest, tearing through fabric and flesh alike, leaving more blood spreading across him, at this rate soon the blackness would swallow him whole. The more he struggled, the harder the claws dug in, its arms wrapping around him until he couldn't breathe, couldn't see.

He opened his mouth to scream but too much of his throat had been torn away, so all he could produce was a choked, gurgling cry as the blackness engulfed him completely.

******

Will woke with a startled cry, panting, sweat-soaked, his chest heaving as his fists tangled roughly in the sheets. He gasped for breath, his whole body shaking as he buried his head in his hands, trying to muffle the desperate sob which fell from his lips. He felt strangely conscious of the fact that Hannibal was only a few rooms down the hall, didn't want to wake him despite the scream which burned its way up the back of his throat, forcing him to swallow it roughly down.

He stood from the bed, stripping off his shirt and leaving it in a heap on the floor before he walked to the bathroom, not bothering to switch on the light as he braced himself against the sink, turning on the taps and splashing water on his face, before looking up to meet his eye in the mirror.

Will stared at himself for a long moment, eyes zoning in on the dark bruise Hannibal had left on his neck. Suddenly he saw black spreading from the mark, enveloping his skin, felt it choking at him, couldn't breathe as he clawed at his own throat. A second later it was gone, and Will saw himself reflected as he was in the mirror once more.

He met his own gaze for a long moment, then raised his fist and slammed it into the glass.

*****

Hannibal woke at the sound glass shattering, muffled by the wall which stood between the rooms.

Will . His brain supplied unhelpfully and he rolled out of bed, grabbing his robe from where it hung on the back of the door and tying it tight over his silk pyjamas and stood up. He crossed the room quickly, making his way down the hall to Will's room.

He unlocked the door and entered, immediately noticing something was wrong. Will wasn't in bed, however his shirt lay on the floor beside the bed and the door to the bathroom stood open. Hannibal approached the door, silent in his slippered feet, eyes adjusting to the blackness of the room as he peered in.

Will was seated on the floor just beside the sink, head bowed, knees tucked up to his chest.

"Will?" Hannibal called out.

No response. He breathed deeply and his nose caught the sharp tang of fresh blood.

"Will, are you alright?" Hannibal stepped forwards, as he entered the room he caught sight of the glass, which glinted under what moonlight poured in through the window; the apparent remnants of what had once been the vanity mirror.

Will finally looked up as Hannibal picked his way carefully across the floor. He had a long shard of glass clenched in his fist and blood ran down from his palm, trailing over his forearm, dripping from his elbow to pool on the pristine tiles.

"I couldn't look at myself without seeing you on my skin." The words fell from Will's lips as a shaky whisper, and he showed his teeth in a pointed, threatening sort of smile, something reminiscent of a trapped animal.

"Will." Hannibal crouched beside him, reaching out.

"Don't touch me!" Will scrambled backwards until his back collided with the wall, holding the shard in front of him like a weapon even as blood continued to run down his arm.

"Will please." Hannibal pressed forward, there was a sharp fluttering in his chest, something he hadn't felt in years. *Concern* . "I only want to-"

He was cut off when Will lashed out, striking with the glass shard, catching Hannibal across the cheek. Hannibal's head snapped to one side, and his flesh stung where the glass had met his skin. He raised two fingers to his cheek and found them wet with blood, frowning down at them before meeting Will's eye again.

"I'm not going to hurt you, I just need to look at your hand." He said softly, it was obvious to him that Will's mental state was rather hazardous, so he exercised caution in his approach. "Will you let me do that?"

Will was silent for a long moment, but some clarity seemed to come into his eyes and he nodded, swallowing as he released his grip on the shard of glass, letting it fall to the ground. "Okay."

He held out his hand, palm up, and Hannibal gently took it in his own, spreading the fingers so as to get a better look at the injury. It was a deep, jagged line which stretched it's way

diagonally across Will's palm, and Hannibal sucked his teeth quietly at the sight of it.

"This will require stitches." He said, looking up to meet Will's eye. "Will you let me do that for you?"

"Do I really have a choice in that?" Will retorted, but the words were monotone, like he was reading from a script.

"Well, I suppose you can refuse, but your stubbornness would only impact you negatively."

Will said nothing else, just nodded, and Hannibal stood to rummage in the cabinet, pulling out a first aid kit before returning to Will's side.

Will was silent as Hannibal set to work on his hand, hissed lightly as the antiseptic brushed over his skin, and winced just a little each time the needle pierced his flesh, but offered no other protest.

"I figured it out, you know," he said, when Hannibal had tied off the stitches and was wrapping gauze around the injured appendage.

He glanced up at Will then, a question clear in his dark eyes.

"None of this is about me, not really. You want what everyone wants, for someone to see you, to *understand* you, but no one ever has, so you've become obsessed with the idea." He laughed, and the sound was cruel, left Hannibal's ears ringing. "You see yourself as so far above it all, but at the end of the day, you're just as desperate for connection as the rest of us. It's almost pathetic."

Hannibal had no idea how to respond, could barely find it in him to admit that the words *stung* , far sharper than the glass across his cheek. It was an odd sensation, he was often displeased with things people said to him, but never hurt, Will could hurt him, and the thought terrified him in that instant.

He pushed the feeling down, swallowed, keeping his face neutral as he finished bandaging the wound.

"We should get you to bed." He said, when he could finally trust himself to speak again.

Will raised an eyebrow at that. "Yours or mine?" He asked, tone cold.

Hannibal just shook his head at that. "You are not in the appropriate state of mind to make that decision." He said shortly, taping off the gauze without meeting Will's eye.

Will snorted. "Since when have you cared about my state of mind anyway?"

Hannibal opened his mouth to reply but was cut off when Will grabbed him by the lapels, dragging him forward into a rough, open-mouthed kiss. Their teeth clacked together with the force of it, and Will clung to him almost desperately, arms bracing like steel around the back of Hannibal's neck, trapping their mouths together. Hannibal melted into the touch for a

moment, a low moan escaping his lips at the contact. He couldn't help but revel in the scrape of Will's nails over the back of his neck, the warmth of Will's tongue sliding across his own.

But this wasn't right, this wasn't how he wanted this to happen. Will didn't want this, not really, and Hannibal knew that. So he broke the contact, pressing a hand to Will's chest and pushing him gently backwards.

"Will, stop." He said, keeping his hand on Will's chest so as to maintain the distance between them.

"What's the matter?" Will snapped. "I thought this was what you wanted."

"I don't want you to humour me, Will." Hannibal replied shortly, keeping his tone even, calming. "If this happens, it will be because it is what *you* want. If not, then it won't happen."

Will slumped forwards then, pressing his face into the crook of Hannibal's neck, a sob wracking his frame. "I hate you so fucking much," he whispered against Hannibal's skin, but he clung to him nonetheless, hands fisting in the back of Hannibal's shirt like he never wanted to let him go.

"Hush." Hannibal murmured, pressing a kiss to the top of Will's head, holding him closer. In that moment, he found himself overwhelmed by how protective he felt towards Will. That, combined with the guilt he felt for causing Will this distress created a desperate need to *fix* what he had done. To somehow compensate for the damage that was his own doing.

He sighed. "Now, I need to clean up this glass, darling, do you mind if I move you?"

Will didn't respond, didn't seem to hear through whatever breakdown he was having. So Hannibal sighed, reached under Will and lifted him carefully. Will let out a small sound clinging to him as he was lifted, arms tightening around the back of Hannibal's neck.

Hannibal carried Will out of the bathroom, careful to avoid the glass. He paused by the bed, taking in the sweat-soaked sheets with distaste. It was not in an appropriate state for Will to sleep in.

He hesitated only a moment before coming to a decision, carrying Will out the door and down the hall. He had left the door to his own room open, and so did not have to struggle as he brought Will in, laying him gently on the bed.

Will rolled onto his side, face half-buried in the pillow as he watched Hannibal with one eye. "Your bed after all." He murmured.

"I assure you my intentions are not untoward," Hannibal replied. "Your sheets need changing."

He was calmer now, seemingly exhausted by his apparent breakdown, but his breathing still shook.

Hannibal entered the ensuite, returning a moment later with a glass of water and a small white pill in his palm. He held it out to Will, who eyed it skeptically.

“Something to help you sleep.” Hannibal clarified. Will nodded, seeming desperate enough for rest that questions did not concern him. He took the pill from Hannibal, swallowing it easily, laying down and resting his head on the pillow, rolling to face away from Hannibal.

“Get some rest.” Hannibal whispered, his gaze lingering on the back of Will’s head a moment too long as he drew the blanket tight around the other man’s shoulders. Then he turned and left, making his way to the spare bedroom. He didn’t bother to close the door behind him, he doubted Will would bother with an escape attempt in this state anyway.

Sweeping up shards of mirror from the bathroom floor, Hannibal caught sight of his face reflected hundredfold, saw the cut on his cheek, the blood now clotting on his skin. He wondered if it would scar, and in that moment found he hoped it would.

Hoped that, after all this was over, he’d still bear some permanent reminder of Will on his skin.

*****

Will woke with the sun, his eyes opened and for a moment he was confused, unfamiliar with his surroundings. Then the memories flooded back from the night before. The dream, smashing the mirror, Hannibal coming to his goddamn rescue like this whole mess wasn’t his fault in the first place. And the memory of Hannibal scooping him up in his arms and carrying him to bed….

He’d been tucked in by a serial killer for Christ’s sake.

It was then that Will noticed the obvious thing, he was alone in the bed. Either Hannibal had risen before him, or he simply hadn’t slept in the bed with him, rather giving up his own bed for Will. The thought made his brow furrow deeply. Will shifted then, rolling over to get a better view of the room, and nearly jumped out of his skin when he saw Hannibal.

He was asleep in a chair which he’d pulled up beside the bed, his head bowed so that his chin rested against his chest.

Hannibal had given up his bed for Will. Hannibal had tucked him in. Hannibal had passed out in a chair beside him after cleaning up the mess he’d made, just watching to make sure Will was okay.

His eyes found the cut on Hannibal’s cheek, sealed neatly with a butterfly bandage and he felt a twinge of guilt. Sure, maybe on a general scale, Hannibal deserved it, but he *had* been trying to help Will.

Hannibal could have slept in the bed with Will. He’d chosen not to, so as not to make him uncomfortable.

Will couldn't stop the smile that tugged at the corners of his mouth at that, even if he hated himself for it.

Hannibal's eyes opened then, as if on cue, and he blinked sleepily, looking, in the moments before the mask reassembled over his face, remarkably human.

"Good morning, Will." He said, smiling shortly.

"Morning." Will was still groggy -from sleep or from the remnants of the sedative Hannibal had given him the night before he was unsure- and his voice came out far rougher than he meant it to.

There was a long moment in which the two men watched each other, neither seeming quite sure what to say next. Then Will spoke.

"You carried me here." He said slowly.

"Of course." Hannibal replied. "You didn't seem capable of moving on your own."

"You slept in a chair, you didn't have to do that." A pause. "I can't imagine it was comfortable."

"No, it was not." A chuckle and a shake of his head. "I thought it was best, given our recent disagreement."

Will was quiet for a long time at that. It was a statement easily misconstrued of course, could be read as simple manipulation, Hannibal trying to convince Will he actually gave a shit as a means to getting what he wanted from him.

But why did it sound so genuine?

Will felt a not unpleasant sort of fluttering in his stomach at the idea that maybe Hannibal did, in his own way, genuinely *care* about Will, and he pressed his lips together at the feeling, rolling further onto his side so that half his face pressed into the pillow, watching Hannibal with one, heavy lidded eye. "Well, I'm exhausted, I plan on sleeping the day away, so don't bother trying to move me again."

Hannibal nodded. "You had a long night, you need the rest." He extended a hand, thoughtlessly seeking to push a loose curl out of Will's eyes, but Will's hand shot out reflexively, catching Hannibal by the wrist before he could reach him.

There was a brief moment in which he was unsure of what to do. He looked up at Hannibal, saw that same lack of assurance in his eyes, and made up his mind, pulling the hand forward and pressing a light kiss to Hannibal's knuckles before he released his wrist again.

"Thank you." Will whispered against the skin there.

"There is no need to thank me." Hannibal replied shortly. "I merely did what anyone would."

Will wanted to say that, no, that was absolutely not what any normal person would do, but honestly he didn't see a point in driving the point. Instead he managed to surprise himself with his next words. "You know, you had a long night too," Will raised an eyebrow, shifting a bit further from the edge of the bed, patting the place beside him invitingly. "And your back must hurt from sleeping in that chair."

"I do recall telling you last night that I don't want you to humour me, Will." Hannibal pressed his lips together.

"I'm not, as a matter of fact, I'd say I'm asking you to humour *me* ."

Hannibal was silent for a long moment, then sighed, seeming to concede, he pulled back the blanket and crawled underneath. When Will pressed closer to him, he willingly let the other man slip under his arm to rest his head on his chest.

Will closed his eyes, breathing deeply and listening to the steady thrum of Hannibal's heart as he drifted off to sleep once more, the last thing he was aware of was fingers carding gently through his hair.

*****

Jack knew immediately that something was wrong when he found Alana Bloom in his office first thing in the morning, flagged by a rather angry looking Beverly Katz.

"Can I ask what you two are doing here before I've even had the chance to drink my coffee?" He asked, sitting down at his desk.

"Have you seen it yet?" Beverly was periodically clenching and unclenching her fists in the fabric of her coat.

"Seen what?" Jack said, surprised by the urgency of her tone.

"The latest TattleCrime article."

"Christ, what does Freddie have to say now?" Jack knew right then that his day was only gonna get progressively shittier as it went on.

Beverly silently pulled up the article on her phone, handing it to Jack. He read through the webpage, feeling his blood boil more and more the further down he scrolled. He reached the bottom, and handed the phone back to Beverly, resting his head in his hands for a long moment.

"Jack…" Alana started, but Jack held up a hand, silencing her.

"God, there has to be something we can sue her for, right? Libel maybe."

“Against who?” Beverly cocked an eyebrow. “This is low, Jack, even for her. She didn’t even try to write something that made sense, it’s… well it’s *fiction* .”

“Yeah, but we live in an age where people will believe any fiction if it’s marketed as journalism.”

“All the more reason to ignore it, Jack.” Alana said. “If you get caught up in the Freddie mess, it’ll only distract you.”

“So what?”

“So, you find Will, and when you do, journalists won’t have to resort to fiction anymore.”

*****

When Will woke next, Hannibal was sitting up beside him in bed, a tablet propped on his knee, a furrow in his brow. Will watched him for a moment, took in how enraptured he was with whatever it was he was reading before he spoke.

“Reading something interesting?” He asked, and Hannibal actually started as he broke focus, turning his gaze on Will.

“Interesting is certainly a word for it.” A pause. “It seems with so little information, Freddie Lounds has resorted to fiction.” He slid the laptop over to Will, who squinted at the article, trying desperately to ignore the hideous format of Freddie’s website. Clearly she hadn’t bothered with hiring someone to design it for her.

Will read the article, frowned, the further down he got the more ridiculous it was, until he wasn’t sure if he wanted to laugh out loud or track Freddie down and strangle her with his bare hands.

“Wow, she uh, really dislikes me, doesn’t she.”

Hannibal actually laughed a little at that. “If it helps any, other news platforms seem far more sympathetic to your plight.”

“Yeah, she mentions that in the article actually.” Will’s eyes were focused on one line in particular.

“While other news sources paint the picture of an FBI agent suffering at the hands of an obsessed madman, it is my duty as a reporter to explore all possibilities, and I am of the belief that the Chesapeake Ripper is not the sort to keep a prisoner alive. Rather, dear readers, we must consider the idea that perhaps our kidnapped *agent, was not that at all, but rather vanished of his own volition, one psychopath seeking solace in the mind of another.”*

“Well, she certainly paints a picture.” Will grudgingly handed the tablet back to Hannibal.

“Her disdain for you is curious, if unfounded.”

“Yeah, well, Freddie’s been a thorn in my side since Hobbs, she makes all her money in slander.” Will sighed, pulling all the way into a sitting position, his back popping as he stretched. It struck him than that he was still dressed in only his boxers, sitting on the bed of the man who’d held him hostage for two months now. He should feel vulnerable. Why didn’t he then?

“If she were here now, in this room with you, what would be your first instinct?” Hannibal asked, watching Will intently.

“First instinct?” Will licked his lips. “Well, the first thought would be to wrap my hands around her throat, I know the most effective way to do that now, thanks to you.”

Hannibal’s breath hitched a little at the words.

“But that doesn’t mean I’d act on it. See, that’s the difference between the two of us, Hannibal.” Will replied tightly. “I’m aware of when an instinct needs to be repressed.”

“If we learn our limitations to soon, we never learn our power.”

“I’d say you learned your power just fine.” Will retorted, in his mind images of the ripper's murders flashed by, flickering like a silent film, an homage to the artist responsible for them; the artist who sat so calmly beside Will now, dressed in silk pyjamas and a housecoat, so utterly detached from the monster Will understood him to be.

“Believe it or not Will, there was a time in my life where even I was quite powerless, what I have now, I had to fight to achieve.” There was something haunted behind Hannibal’s eyes, and Will couldn’t help but wonder at it.

“The hardship that came in the middle of the privilege then?” He asked, a reference to their earlier conversation.

Hannibal hummed his assent, shutting the laptop and tucking it away in a drawer beside the bed. “Still curious as to what makes a creature like me?”

“Isn’t everyone?” Will was deflecting again, but he couldn’t really help it. Being straightforward with Hannibal was never a good plan of action.

“Yes, I suppose they are.” Hannibal smiled a little at that. “Perhaps one day someone will know.” He stared at Will for a long time, something indeterminate playing behind his eyes. “But today is not that day.” He swung his legs over the side of the bed. “Now, we’ve managed to sleep the day away, so let’s at least have…” He glanced at the clock. “Well, I suppose we’ll call it brunch.”

*****

“Would you like to talk about what happened last night?” Hannibal asked, eyeing Will where he sat across from him at the table.

“Bad dreams again.” Will wouldn’t meet his eye, a shudder ran through him as his mind recalled the dream so viscerally. Hannibal’s brow furrowed at that.

“It seemed a bit more than that.”

“Look, I’m not your patient, *Doctor* , so I’d appreciate it if you dropped it.”

Hannibal winced a little at the use of his title rather than his name, but Will felt no guilt this time.

“I’m worried about you, Will.” He said after a long pause. “Your behaviour has become increasingly erratic."

“You’re worried about me?” Will raised an eyebrow. “ *Really* ?”

Hannibal sighed. “Is that so hard to believe?”

Will was quiet for a long moment, not wanting to admit that it wasn’t, not at all. “You have no idea what it’s like, living with a mind like mine.” He said finally, a cold laugh bubbling up in his throat. “To feel other people’s emotions like they’re your own… It’s why I spend so much time alone, I’m… better off that way.”

“You fear losing yourself? Forgetting which emotions are yours and which aren’t?”

“No, I know who I am.” Will clarified. “I can tell the difference between my thoughts and yours, but it doesn’t change the fact that you’re always right there, like ants crawling across the back of my skull… Every whim, every desire…”

Will trailed off, Hannibal was looking at him with something akin to awe in his eyes. “No, I don’t suppose I can imagine what that feels like.” Hannibal responded quietly, and then. “Does it frighten you?”

“No.” Will said, without clarification. What worried him was that it *didn’t* frighten him, Hannibal’s thoughts should repulse him, but rather they woke something in Will, some dark, growling beast which lurked in the back of his subconscious, just waiting to claw its way out.

Will turned away then, casting his gaze to the window. Outside, rain fell, pattering against the glass, casting the street in a grey blur.

“I miss the rain.” Will said quietly, as he watched it trail over the glass. “I used to go out sometimes, on rainy nights, just to sit on my porch. It helped me think I guess.”

Hannibal said nothing, just watched with contemplation as Will stared out the window. The remainder of their meal was eaten in silence.

*****

Will dreamt again that night; saw himself tr apped in the cabin, the stag howling outside, the beast advancing on him, backing him into a wall as it raised a clawed talon, reaching out to touch him.

Will's hand shot out then, catching the creature by its wrist, and it froze beneath his touch, a deep shudder running through it. Will's eyes found the place where they touched, widening in surprise as he saw black skin beginning to recede beneath his hand, replaced by something far more similar to his own.

Will shifted then, sliding his hand up the length of the creature's arm, leaving trails of new, peachy-pink skin in the wake of his fingertips.

The beast dropped its gaze, seeming transfixed by its own transformation, then turned it's hollow gaze back to Will, who had grown far bolder in his curiosity. He slid his hand up, over the left side of the creature's face, watching the skin ripple and shift. Stubble pricked at his palm, black lips changed to pink, hollow eyes grew more human, until Will found himself staring at something half-man half beast, something which leaned into his touch, bringing one clawed hand up to keep Will's hand against it's cheek.

"Will?" The voice seemed to come from nowhere and everywhere at once. "Will wake up."

*****

Will opened his eyes to find Hannibal standing beside the bed, watching him passively.

"What the fuck?" Will shoved himself into a sitting position, brow furrowed deeply as he rubbed sleep from his eyes. "What time is it?"

"Probably a bit past two?" Hannibal seemed to be ignoring Will's colourful choice of language.

"Then why-" Will cut himself off, rubbing a hand over his face roughly. The dream lingered in the back of his mind, different from the others, it hadn't left his pulse pounding in his chest, nor sweat drenching his body, but rather had given him a quiet sense of power, something he couldn't quite put a name to.

"It's raining again." Hannibal said shortly. It was only then that Will noticed the quiet patter of rain on the glass.

"So?"

"I thought you might like to go out and sit."

That gave Will pause, and he eyed Hannibal with thinly veiled suspicion, even as his heart leapt into his throat. “Not scared I’ll run away on you?”

“You wouldn’t make it very far.” Hannibal replied, and Will could admit -at least to himself- that that was probably the case.

Anyway, he really couldn’t resist such an offer; the prospect of feeling the rain on his face, smelling the fresh air for the first time in months… well it was almost too much. So Will just nodded, climbing out of bed, he followed Hannibal out of the bedroom.

Hannibal lead Will out through the dining room, through a sliding glass door and onto a covered veranda overlooking a yard which was exactly as well kept as Will had imagined it would be. Privacy fences bracketing an immaculate lawn, a towering oak, several small flower gardens.

He stood behind Will, watching as the other man paused, closing his eyes for a moment, breathing deeply as he took in the scent of a storm fresh on the air. It was cathartic, his first breath of fresh air in more than two months, and in that moment, there was nothing Will wanted more than to feel the rain on his face. He stepped forwards, slowly crossing the veranda, sighing as his bare feet sunk into the soft, wet grass. Will turned his head upwards; he could just make out the moon, peeking from behind the clouds, and he smiled, sucking in a breath as the first drop hit his skin, cold against flesh which suddenly felt far too hot.

Will closed his eyes again, took a long breath, staying still for a long moment, feeling the steady drizzle wash over him, drops rolling down, sliding past his eyelids and over his cheekbones like trailing tears.

When he opened his eyes again, Will found Hannibal standing beside him, watching with something indecipherable glittering behind his dark eyes.

“Thank you.” Will said, when the silence between them threatened to stretch too long.

“There’s no need.”

Will stared at him for a long moment, recalled the dream; saw the man beneath the monster playing so clearly across Hannibal’s features. He looked almost vulnerable in that moment. He realized then just how to push back, how to burrow himself as deeply under Hannibal’s skin as Hannibal was beneath his. Violence wasn’t the answer; resistance only hardened the mask. It was tenderness that cracked it.

He recalled his own words and swallowed down a self-deprecating laugh. *You have to give an inch to get one* .

Will chewed the inside of his cheek, coming to a conclusion in that moment he leaned forwards, catching Hannibal’s face in his hands, pressing his lips softly to Hannibal’s. Hannibal went rigid against him, but Will pressed on, moving his lips against Hannibal’s soothing a thumb over his cheekbone. When Hannibal still didn’t respond, Will pulled back so that just their foreheads rested together.

“You know this works better if you kiss me back, right?”

“If this is you feeling that you owe me…”

“Oh trust me, I don’t owe you shit and we both know it.” Will retorted, his free hand sliding up around the back of Hannibal’s neck.

“Then what is this?”

Will shrugged. “Call it a compromise.”

That seemed answer enough for Hannibal, who caught Will around the waist, pulling him forwards until they were chest-to-chest, their lips meeting in a slow, sweet kiss. They clung to each other then, kissing deeply, even as it started to rain harder, soaking through shirts, plastering Will’s hair to his neck and forehead.

Hannibal pulled back then, huffing a laugh against the sandpaper skin of Will’s cheek. “Perhaps we should go inside.” His sentence was punctuated by a flash of lightning, followed far too closely by the rumble of thunder.

Will nodded. “Probably the best idea.” And with that he allowed himself to be lead by the hand back into the house.

Chapter End Notes

Alright, so it seems my boy has finally started to figure it out, took him long enough, but hey, who am I? just the writer of this monster fic....

Anyway, I -sort of?- have a plan of where to go from here, but also I'm totally open to suggestions if y'all have anything you'd like to see.

As I said before, comments are always appreciated, thank you all for your love and support, you warm my gay little heart.

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

> Hello friends, I am not dead, I am very sorry, this summer has been hectic. Please forgive me

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will woke warm and comfortable, curled up in silk sheets and strong arms. He and Hannibal had come in from out of the rain last night, and fell into bed together, hair still soaked, clinging to necks and foreheads, a gentle exploration of each other of lips and hands, lingering touches and kisses before they drifted off together. Now Will sat up, carefully extricating himself from that grip and looking down at Hannibal with a furrowed brow.

He wondered at the fact that he had woken before Hannibal, it wasn't something he was accustomed to, especially considering the -blissfully- dreamless sleep he had experienced during the latter part of his evening. More concerning was the disarming nature of Hannibal's presence. Rather than make him nervous as it had in the past -as it should, really- Will found himself reassured, wanting to pull closer, lean into Hannibal, seek solace in his arms, despite hating himself every second he desired it.

It seemed that the more time he spent with Hannibal, the more the line between man and monster started to blur, until Will was finally able to see the place in which the two overlapped…

What worried him was that the more he understood Hannibal, the more he grew to appreciate him for what he was.

Will sighed then, slid back down and rolled onto his side, lips quirking in a slight smile as he pressed just a little closer, tucking his face into the crook of his captor's neck and shutting his eyes.

When Will woke again, it was to fingers soothing gently across his cheek, a light kiss to his forehead. Will hummed, leaning into the touch. Hannibal's fingers pressed under his chin, tilting his face up, catching Will's lips in a kiss. Will let him, kissed him back for a moment before ducking his head, pressing his lips together.

"We should probably have a conversation." Hannibal said shortly.

"Probably." Will replied. "But why ruin a good thing?"

"Will…"

“Okay fine, let's do this then.” He sat up, brushing one hand through dark curls. “What do you want? A label? Because as far as I’m concerned, there isn’t a word for whatever this is.”

“No, I don’t suppose there is.” A pause. “What do you want this to be?”

“It’s simple compromise.” Will griped. “We both want something out of this, but I’m a lot more comfortable as the one setting the boundaries.”

“Of course.” Hannibal leaned in close, kissing him again, slow, tender, sweet, and Will huffed a soft breath against his lips, and tried to ignore how guilty he felt for enjoying this. His thoughts cleared from his minds as he found himself rolled flat on his back with Hannibal's lips on the side of his neck, and he laughed breathlessly, pulling the other man close once more.

*****

The Beast lurked in the shadows of the woods, scenting the air, watching his prey with bright eyes in the dark. Two of them, a young couple enjoying the warmth of a fire, no regard for the woods for which their ancestors held such fear. They were arrogant in their humanity, thinking themselves above the animals from which they had evolved.

He felt no distain, rather pity that they’d lost the thing he’d found touch with, the howling animal that lay within man. They were not like him, they had come from nothing, they would Become nothing. He was the Beast and they were his prey. Soon all that would matter was the way their blood stained his teeth, the ragged bits of scalp which clung to him, trailing hair like the tails of comets.

The Beast let out a low growl, heart racing as he charged.

******

Beverly Katz sipped her coffee, staring down at what had apparently been two people not twelve hours ago, but now was two collections of spare parts, arranged into the rough shape of human silhouettes. Her top lip curled in disgust as she spoke. “Are you sure it wasn’t an animal attack?”

“Well, considering we found *all* of the pieces…” Zeller began.

“And the bite patterns don’t match any animal we know of, well… any not currently extinct…” Price continued.

“Yeah, I’d say we’re pretty sure.” The men grinned at each other over the two mangled corpses, and Beverly rolled her eyes.

“So what?” She paused, taking a long sip of her coffee. “Death by fossil?”

“With the help of hydraulics maybe…” Price frowned. “The force of the bite was too much to be anything but mechanical.”

“We think he built a suit.” Zeller elaborated.

“Seems like a lot of work just to make it look like an animal attack.” Beverly pressed her lips together.

“Perhaps the goal not to make it look like an animal attack, but rather for it to feel like one.” The voice was unfamiliar, cultured and accented, and Beverly turned towards it, her eyes first falling to Jack before narrowing on the man behind him. Eccentric was definitely a word for it. The brown and orange plaid suit was certainly a bold look, though that didn’t quantify it as a *good* one.

Probably a shrink , her brain supplied, and then her eyes trailed up past the extravagantly patterned tie to the smug twist of his mouth. *Scratch that, definitely a shrink* .

“Who’s this?”

“This is Doctor Hannibal Lecter, he’ll be consulting on this case with us.” Jack elaborated.

“A doctor. Is that medicine or psychiatry?”

“Both actually. Though I’m retired from the former.”

Shrink. Score one for Katz . She raised her coffee to her mouth to hide her grin, pleased with herself. “What was that you were saying when you came in?”

“I merely suggested that perhaps you’re searching for a man who thinks he’s an animal, or at the very least wishes to become one.” He picked up the file from where it lay on the desk, flipping it open, rifling through the contents. He turned his gaze to Jack then. “May I make copies of this? I wanted to compare it with my own notes.” A pause. “I will keep the information confidential, of course.”

“Of course.” Jack nodded. “Whatever you need, Doctor.”

Beverly turned back to her work then, but not before she noticed the slight twitch at one corner of Lecter’s mouth.

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The file landed on the table beside Will, and he glanced down at it before flicking his gaze curiously up to meet Hannibal's. "What is this?"

"What do you think it is?"

Will bit the inside of his cheek, he knew this was some sort of game, though he wasn't yet certain of Hannibal's angle. Conceding he reached for it. He recognized the contents of the file immediately. "How did you get this?" He snapped his gaze back up to find the corners of Hannibal's mouth twitching in a sly smile, the expression serving as a silent answer to his question. "God, you're arrogant aren't you? You think you'll worm your way into the FBI just to prove you can? They'll catch onto you, you must know that."

"You don't sound certain."

"I caught on pretty quick." Will spat in response.

"They're not you, are they?"

Will shook his head, disregarding the remark, he glanced back down at the file, his fingers twitching with curiosity at what lay between its pages. "Why did you even bring this to me?" He asked, afraid he already knew the answer.

"I want you to tell me what you see." Hannibal sat down across from him, crossing one leg neatly over the other.

Will blinked at him, then shook his head. "No." He said, and then off Hannibal's look. "It's bad enough having *you* up here full time, I'm not adding anyone else to the mix."

"You've told me before you do not fear losing yourself, and considering the number of minds you've climbed inside, what harm is one more?" Hannibal leaned forwards just a bit, and Will could tell this wasn't something he wanted to concede on.

"Why does this matter so much to you?" Will retorted. "I promise you, it's not nearly as interesting to witness from the outside."

"Why not humour me?"

Will tossed the file to one side. "I thought you asked me not to." He retorted.

Hannibal's lips twitched at that. "A compromise then."

Will stood, pacing the length of the room to stand close to the window, peering out through the gap in the curtains, from the spare bedroom all he could see was the backyard, yet it was enough, after being locked up for so long, to calm him just a bit. "A compromise requires reciprocity." A pause. "You haven't offered me anything."

"What would you like from me?" Hannibal's voice was close behind Will now. He must have followed him across the room, though Will hadn't heard him rise from the chair.

“You want to get inside of my head, but you won’t let me into yours.” Will still didn’t turn, peering out at the world he no longer felt a part of.

“Information then?” A strong arm wrapped around him, and he felt himself being pulled back against Hannibal’s broad chest, breath hot against the back of his neck. “All you need to ever do is ask, Will.”

“You’re hardly an open book.”

“Nor are you.” Hannibal was dragging a slow line of kisses from his shoulder up to his earlobe. “You speak of reciprocity only when it suits you.”

“ *Hannibal*.” Will warned.

“My apologies, Will. Would you like me to stop?” Two of Hannibal’s fingers had slipped between the buttons of Will’s shirt, and stroked absently over the skin of his stomach.

Will turned in his arms then, and Hannibal let him, staying close enough that their noses nearly brushed together. “I’d like you to stop *talking* .” He growled, his hand catching Hannibal’s tie, tugging until their lips met.

Hannibal kissed him back, leaning into it so that Will bent backwards just a bit, the position allowing for Hannibal to have more control overall. Not to be outdone, Will pressed back, and his teeth caught on Hannibal’s lower lip, digging in hard. Hannibal gasped at that, lips parting, and Will deepened the kiss, kept pressing Hannibal backwards until the backs of his knees hit the edge of the bed. Will looked up at him, desire dancing clear in his eyes and he twisted the fabric of Hannibal’s tie around his hand. He pressed on his chest then, and Hannibal went willingly, seating himself on the edge of the bed and gazing up at Will with something akin to awe in his eyes.

Will kissed him again, climbing into his lap and settling there. Hannibal’s hands came to rest on his hips, and he broke the kiss, pressing his face into the crook of Will’s neck, inhaling deeply. “Feeling affectionate today?” He murmured against the skin there. “Or are you merely this determined to stop me from asking about the file?”

“Maybe I just enjoyed a day free of you psychoanalyzing me, and figured I should shut you up before you got started again.”

Hannibal chuckled at that, his lips trailing over Will’s jaw, up to the place behind his ear where he pressed a soft kiss. Will’s breath hitched just a little at that. Then Hannibal moved further down, catching skin between his teeth, never missing an opportunity to mark Will up. Will’s hand slid up into Hannibal’s hair, holding him there against his neck. “I was gone for longer than usual today.” There was something tender in his eyes when he met Will’s eye again, pressing their foreheads together. “You almost sound as if you missed me.”

“Shut up.” Will growled, pushing him back onto the mattress, hovering on all fours above him.

“I’m only pointing out to you that your self control is slipping.” Hannibal slipped an am around the back of Will’s neck, tugging him closer.

Will clenched his jaw at that, pulling back a bit to glare at the man beneath him. “Would you rather I prove to you how good myself control is?” He asked, a challenge blazing in blue eyes.

In lieu of a response, Hannibal lunged upwards, flipping their position so that Will lay spread out on his back, slotting himself into the place between Will’s thighs. Will laughed breathlessly as Hannibal’s lips found his neck again, his hands sliding down the length of Will’s ribs and back up again, untucking his shirt as he went. The touch was firm, possessive, and Will leaned into it, his hand holding the back of Hannibal's neck to keep him close, nails biting into the skin just a bit.

“I’ll take that as a no.” Hannibal just kissed him, and Will’s lips parted eagerly as Hannibal’s tongue slipped into his mouth, hot and possessive. Hannibal rolled his hips down into Will’s, and Will responded by hooking a leg around his waist, tugging him closer.

His hands found Hannibal’s tie, pulling it out from his waistcoat, wrapping it around his fist and using it to pull the other man down to him, holding him there, even as his free hand struggled to push the jacket from the other man’s shoulders.

Hannibal sat back, or tried to, but was caught by Will’s hand fisted in the fabric of his tie. Hannibal chuckled at that. “Will, if you would like me to remove my jacket, you’re going to have to let go.” Will grumbled, but did as he was asked, and Hannibal sat back, removing his suit jacket, folding it neatly. As soon as he’d placed it on the side table Will’s hands were on the tie again, and he yanked Hannibal down into another kiss.

“Eager boy.”Hannibal smiled against Will’s throat, catching skin between his teeth, hands finding the buttons of Will’s shirt, kissing each new inch of skin as it was revealed to him. Will pressed up into the contact, a low moan falling from his lips as Hannibal's thumb brushed over his nipple, sending a shock of pleasure through him.

“You are so lovely.” Hannibal hummed, lips trailing over Will’s collarbone down onto his chest. “Laid out before me like this.”

“Like a sacrifice.” Will’s brain supplied, and he clenched his teeth when he realized he’d said it aloud.

Hannibal’s breath hitched at that, and he looked up at Will, pupils blown wide with desire. “There were many cultures in which it was considered an honour to be sacrificed.” He murmured. “The act of voluntarily giving oneself over to something greater yielded reward in the next life.” He smiled, as if pleased by his own metaphor.

“Yeah, well, I’m just trying to make it through this life.” He replied shortly. “The next one is whatever happens after…”

“After me.”

“As long as I survive you.” The words slipped from his lips like a last breath, swallowed up as Hannibal kissed him again. There was something more forceful about it, and all at once Will really did feel like a sacrifice, laid bare and vulnerable for the man above him. “I’m still not yours, you know.” He said, feeling the need to undercut the parts of himself that were so visible.

Hannibal kissed Will’s lips, his chin, back down over the bare expanse of his chest, pushing his shirt aside to kiss across his shoulder. “You are as much mine as I am yours.” He whispered against the skin there. “And in this moment when each gives to the other freely, do we not then belong to the other?”

Will shook his head. “No.” He said, derisively. “Even if I let you fuck me, it wouldn’t make me yours.”

He heard Hannibal’s breath hitch at the words, cried out as teeth sunk sharply into the muscle of his shoulder. Tipped his head back and gasped as Hannibal rolled their hips together a bit more forcefully.

“That wasn’t an offer.” Will left the *not yet* off the end of the sentence but it still hung in the air between them like so much smoke.

“No, I suppose not.” Hannibal adjusted his position then, sliding lower down the length of Will’s body, pressing kisses along his stomach, and Will hummed, the muscles jumping beneath the contact, one hand sliding down, fingers carding delicately through Hannibal’s hair. “Still there is something you want.” Lower now, mouthing over Will’s hip bone where it jutted over the waistline of his pants, and Will bit his lips, angling his hips up just a bit more.

“God, are you really gonna make me-”

“Tell me what you want, Will.”

“Seems like you already know.” Will tightened his grip on Hannibal’s hair, pushing him lower, canting his hips up expectantly.

Hannibal smiled then, pressed a kiss to Will’s abdomen, before his hands went to his belt. It didn’t take long for him to have pulled Will out, stroking him twice before swallowing him down almost immediately, causing Will to let out a sharp groan of surprise, free hand holding on to a fistful of duvet for dear life. “Oh fuck.” Will spread his legs a little wider, allowing easier access as he tugged a little more roughly at Hannibal’s hair, eliciting a pleased sound from the other man. Then Hannibal pulled back again, tongue tracing over the head of Will’s cock before sucking it into his mouth.

Hannibal took his time after that, almost methodical in his exploration, completely ignorant to the way Will tugged at his hair, the way he fell into a keening mess beneath his touches, desperate for release and struggling to press his hips up against the strong hands which held him still. Hands which moved to hook on the waistband of his pants, tugging them lower, further exposing him, hands which then slide under Will, kneading into the flesh of his ass.

Will's hand, the one not still tangled in Hannibal's hair, fisted in the sheets then, and he slammed his head back against the pillow, next breath coming out in a choked sort of sob. "Oh fuck, Hannibal please I need…" He wasn't sure what he needed, but Hannibal seemed to know, his thumb slid into the cleft of Will's ass then, thumb pressing against his hole, and with a sharp cry Will came down Hannibal's throat.

He lay there a moment, chest heaving as he caught his breath, before looking down at Hannibal, who gazed up at him, pupils blow, hair a mess from Will's hand, face flushed. Will reached for him then, pulling him up into a greedy kiss, his hands going to Hannibal's fly. He jerked him hard and fast, swallowing up the short stuttered moans which fell from Hannibal's lips with his own. It wasn't long until Hannibal was coming into his fist with a broken cry, his head falling into the cleft of Will's shoulder as they collapsed on the mattress in a tangled heap.

They lay like that for a long moment, neither seeming to want to move. It was Will who finally shifted position, when the full weight of Hannibal on top of him became uncomfortable. He didn't move far, couldn't really if he wanted to, with the pair of arms wrapped around the middle of him, so he resigned himself to Hannibal's head resting on his chest, a huffed laugh falling from his lips.

"Something funny?"

"Just realized I must be a pretty terrible profiler if I left *cuddler* off the list of things to look out for."

Hannibal actually laughed at that, smiling against the skin of Will's chest. "It's my best kept secret."

"Now that I don't believe." Will responded, and they fell into a deep silence again, something which hung heavy between them.

"I'll look at the file." Will said, after it became almost unbearable. "But you owe me a secret. Whatever I decide to ask, whenever I decide to ask it, you have to answer me."

Hannibal sat up then, meeting Will's gaze directly, something dark showing behind his eyes. "I will agree to this, however, you should be mindful in your questions, Will." He warned. "There are corners of my mind where even I fear to tread."

By the look in his eye, Will had never believed anything to be more true.

Chapter End Notes

WHOO! The bitch is BACK! Took me long enough. Thank you all for your patience, I hope you enjoyed this chapter. It was a bit weird to work with because i've got plot points to set up, but I promise more will happen in the next one.

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will hated the contents of that file, couldn't stand the glossy 8x10 images of crime scenes, limbs strewn about with no pattern or method; a Jackson Pollock of blood and viscera. *Tasteless.*

He tried to explain this to Hannibal, and the man cocked his head to one side, eyeing him curiously. “Why do you think that is?"

"It seems..." Will pressed his lips together, "tasteless. It’s brutality for brutality’s sake.” Will spat the words. “There’s no…” He trailed off, not wanting to say aloud what he felt in that moment.

“No what, Will?” Hannibal inched closer, moving like liquid across the room, sliding up into Will’s space once more.

“There was no *finesse* to it.” Will whispered. “No art.”

Hannibal’s hand rose to catch his chin, tilting his head back, smiling sweetly down at him. “How long you’ve denied yourself.” He breathed the words against Will’s lips, thumb stroking tenderly across the man’s cheek. “And it’s only here, in this moment that you can admit to me that there is some beauty in what you see.”

Will let his eyes fall shut for a long moment, breathing in the smell of Hannibal. “There is… an intimacy to it.”

“To taking life?”

“Yes.”

“Blood and breath are only elements undergoing change to fuel your radiance… your Becoming.” Will reached up then, slipped an arm around Hannibal’s neck, pulling him so they were chest-to-chest. “A process set in motion the moment you pulled the trigger on Hobbs. The act which in turn, lead you to me.”

“The… red string of fate, tied around my wrist…” He whispered against the other man’s lips.

“No man is immune to Lady Fortune, Will.” He kissed him then, a sweet, unhurried thing.

“I’m not fortune’s fool.” Will laughed then, unable to ignore the allusion there. “I’m yours.”

When Hannibal kissed him again, Will let himself melt into it.

*****

Their relationship evolved strangely as they fell into easy intimacy. Will spent most of his nights in Hannibal's bed, not sexually, not necessarily, but it was nice to have the comfort of another person. He found, whatever the reason, Hannibal chased the nightmares away. Even when he woke, sweat-soaked and panting Hannibal held him; kissed him sweetly, whispered assurances against his skin until he drifted off again.

It was evening, and Will was sitting on the edge of his bed, there was a twinge in his shoulder which had grown in its persistence over the past week, some lingering tension which shot down the length of his spine, and he stretched then, pressed at it absently, his mind still mulling over the case file.

He thought of the man who desired to maul, to reach out and touch the more animal aspects of his nature, and he shuddered. That kind of mental illness wasn't the sort of thing to go unnoticed, a psychosis running that deep could destroy a man… unless.

"He tamed it." He muttered to himself.

"Pardon?" Hannibal glanced up from the book he'd been pretending to read as he watched the shift in tension in Will's back and shoulders from the corner of his eye.

"This killer, he would've had some kind of psychiatric care, some repertoire of coping mechanisms to use to his advantage. He… took his psychosis and he built a suit out of it." Will rolled his shoulders, felt another twinge, and flinched.

"Perhaps you should take your mind off it, if it truly distresses you so." Hannibal murmured, shutting the book with a soft thump. Will felt the mattress shift as Hannibal pulled his weight forwards, but he didn't glance back, still rubbing insistently at his shoulder.

"It's not that simple." Will shook his head. "I can't just shut it off."

"Alright?" Hannibal asked, planting a soft kiss to the back of his neck.

"Yeah, fine." Will said softly. "Just stiff."

"Allow me." Hannibal pushed Will's hand away from his shoulder, his own hand coming up to press at the flesh there, fingers kneading into the muscles. Will groaned, let his head fall forward, eyes fluttering shut for a moment.

"Good?" Hannibal's voice was tinged with a certain smugness, and Will grimaced.

"Fishing for compliments, are we?" Will bit his lip a Hannibal thumb pressed into the pinched nerve, loosening his back. Will groaned, he hadn't realized how tight he was wound, how much tension had built up in his spine, until he felt ready to snap in two.

Hannibal's hands found the hem of his t-shirt and Will let it be pulled up over his head and put aside. "This will be easier if you lie down."

He went willingly, laid on his stomach in the middle of the bed. Hannibal came to sit over him, reached into the drawer of the bedside table and pulled out a small bottle of massage oil. Will wasn't even slightly surprised, didn't have time to make a quip before there were strong hands on him again, pressing into his shoulders working down through the knots in his back.

Will groaned, letting his head fall into the crook of his elbow, eyes fluttering closed with pleasure as he let himself become absorbed in the hands on his skin. He was pliant, putty beneath Hannibal's hands as they pressed into his skin, drawing small, breathy moans from him. Hannibal was straddling his hips, and he revelled in the weight of the man atop him.

Hannibal's hands moved slowly down the length of his back, working each knot with care, and Will felt as if years of stress were leaving his muscles. Those hands trailed lower still, paused on Will's hips for a moment, fingers toying with the waistband of his boxers in a silent question. When Will offered no protest, Hannibal tugged them down, sliding past Will's hips to rest on his thighs.

"One track mind, Doctor?" Will chided.

"Perhaps." Hannibal hummed, pressing a light kiss to the skin between Will's shoulder blades. Those strong hands came to knead at the tender skin of Will's ass, and Will bit his lip, a small moan escaping him, and he pressed his lips to the small of Will's back then, thumb sliding down in the cleft of Will's ass. It pressed in then, just to the first knuckle, and Will hissed a little at the intrusion, tensing beneath the touch.

"Do you trust me, Will?" Hannibal whispered against his skin, thumb sliding back out.

"That's a complicated question." Will retorted, but he knew the answer.

"In this moment, do you trust me?"

Will took a deep breath, let it out again. "Yes."

"Good." There was a pause, and Will felt himself being spread out, he tried to relax into the contact. He was surprised when he felt, instead of a probing finger, the light flick of a tongue, and he couldn't stop the high, shocked sound that fell from his lips. He was startled by how *good* it felt, by the way his body rocked back into the touch and he grasped when he felt Hannibal grip his hips, tongue delving deeper, and Will swore as he buried his face into the crook of his elbow.

"Fuck." He was startled by how high his voice came out as another wave of pleasure shot through him. Each time he tried to catch his breath, he felt another flick of Hannibal's tongue, and a shaky sort of sob escaped him. He rose up onto his elbows, using the leverage to press back, wishing he had a better angle, fingers clutching at the sheets as he imagined grabbing Hannibal's hair, pulling him closer; *deeper* . "God, I need…"

Hannibal came up for air then, pressing a line of kisses along the length Will's back, up to his shoulder. "What do you need, Will?" He murmured, hovering close to Will's ear.

Will used the opportunity to turn over beneath Hannibal, smiled up at the man looming over him before catching the back of his head, dragging him down into a kiss. It should have been revolting, knowing where Hannibal's tongue had just been, but he didn't care, pulled him closer, free hand shoving Hannibal's pajama pants down and grabbing hold of his cock. Will stroked it slowly, pulling a series of grunts and pants from the man above him.

"Will." Hannibal sighed against his lips, his head falling to rest in the junction of Will's shoulder. "My Will."

Will rolled them over then, pressing Hannibal down into the mattress. The man looked up at him with something like awe in his eyes, and Will tried not to read into it despite the inherent desire to do so. He licked his palm, grabbed both their cocks in hand and stroked them together, it was a bit too dry, too rough, but Will didn't care, leaned down to nip at Hannibal's lips as the other man moaned and fucked up into his fist. "I told you I'm not *fucking yours* ." Will growled. He was close, unbelievably close, and he trailed a little lower, nipping at the edge of Hannibal's jaw, knowing a mark would show above the collars of his suits. "But you're mine, aren't you?"

"Yours." Hannibal gasped, hands clutching almost desperately at Will, nails biting into his shoulder, into the back of his neck. "All yours."

Will came then, spraying hot spurts of come across Hannibal's chest, and Hannibal tugged him down, kissing him, keening against his lips, desperate for more. Will gave him what he coveted so desperately, kissed down the side of his neck, sucked skin between his teeth. He moved lower on Hannibal's chest, felt the wiry brush of hair against his cheek, caught a nipple between his teeth.

Hannibal was pliant beneath him, gasping, head tossed back as he clutched Will's shoulders, thrusting almost desperately up into his fist. "Please." He begged, and Will loved it, couldn't help but revel in the man who held him hostage pleading for him. "Will…"

"What do you want, hmm?" Will growled against his lips. "Do you want to come?"

"Yes." Hannibal was whining against his mouth, and if Will could get hard again so soon, he would.

"Beg." Will growled against his lips.

Hannibal pressed his lips together, another moan escaping him. "Please, Will." Hannibal pleaded against his mouth.

"Come for me." Will growled, jerking Hannibal hard and fast and just like that he came, head tipped back.

He grabbed Will then, dragged him down into a kiss, tongue probing deep into his mouth. Will rolled over then, flopping onto his back beside Hannibal, panting.

"Fuck." He groaned, he felt lazy and sated, his eyes drifting shut for a moment.

Hannibal rolled over onto his side, watching Will with intensity. “Beautiful.” He said, a small smile gracing his lips.

“Shut up.” Will turned away, not wanting to process the emotions he saw in Hannibal’s eyes. But fuck that was incredible, even if it wasn’t a proper fuck.

Hannibal grabbed him around the waist and pulled him close. “Stay with me.” He said shortly. “Please.”

“Where else would I go?”

Hannibal nuzzled closer, pressed a kiss to the nape of Will’s neck.

They were quiet for a long time, but a thought was racing through Will’s mind, and he let it slip from his tongue unimpeded. “What do you think about when you think about killing?"

Hannibal was quiet for a long moment, his lips brushed over the back of Will’s neck when he spoke again. “I think about God.”

“Good and evil?”

“Good and evil has nothing to do with God.” He pressed a kiss to Will’s shoulder. “I collect church collapses. There was one in Sicily only recently. The facade fell on sixty-five grandmothers during a special mass. Was that evil? Was that God? If he’s up there, he just loves it. Typhoid and swans, it all comes from the same place.”

“God, you’re a pretentious asshole aren’t you.” It wasn’t a question. Hannibal didn’t treat it as one, just pulled him closer kissed along the side of his neck. Will turned over in his arms, caught his mouth in a kiss, nipped at his lip. They lay there for a time, wrapped up in one another’s arm while the darkness of the room hung like smoke around them. Until Will broke that silence again.

"I imagine judgement isn't among your fears?"

"Perhaps one day I will face judgement." Hannibal shrugged. "But if there is a god, he knows what I do, either he allows it or he lacks the power to stop it. What image is that of a benevolent creator?"

Will just snorted. He was too tired for more philosophy bullshit, and he'd struck faith from his life too long ago for the problem to hold real bearing. “Goodnight, Hannibal.” He muttered, turning back over.

“Goodnight, Will.” Hannibal whispered against the back of his neck.

Will lay awake for a long time after that, the cogs in his brain clicking as he considered what to do next.

*****

Will was standing in Hannibal's office, fiddling with the things on his desk. Sketches, and paperweights… a scalpel which drew his attention, despite the knowledge that he wouldn't be able to get it without Hannibal's notice. His gaze fell on a small cup of heavy duty paper clips and something clicked in his brain, but still he felt Hannibal's gaze burning hot on his back.

He acted without much thought then, reaching down to pluck the scalpel from the desk, spinning it between his fingers, drawing deliberate attention to the act.

He felt, rather than saw, Hannibal come up behind him, and grinned slyly to himself. "Will…" there was a warning in Hannibal's tone as he reached to take the blade out of his hand.

Will dodged him, moving the blade out of Hannibal's reach, turning what could have been a threatening interaction into a flirtatious game of keepaway. "Why do you keep a scalpel on your desk?"

"I use it for my pencils, it cuts a sharper point. Please give it to me."

"Bullshit." Will wormed out of his grasp again. "You like knowing you have it, just in case, you never know when you'll need to kill someone in your office."

"Will, the knife." there was something more insistent in his tone now.

Will spun around to face Hannibal then, tucking the scalpel behind his back. He smiled up at Hannibal, one eyebrow raised in challenge. "Make me."

Hannibal reached around the back of him, trying to get a hand on the blade, but Will anticipated the motion, they tussled for a moment, ending with Will pressing the knife beneath the corner of Hannibal's jaw. He kept his smile even, flirtatious even, despite the overwhelming image of the man bleeding out on the floor that rose up in his mind. "What now?" Will leaned a little closer, so that their noses brushed.

Hannibal leaned into the blade a bit more, daring. Will bit his lip, dragged the blade slowly across the other man's skin, drawing beads of blood up to the surface. He lowered the scalpel then, setting it back on the desk, bringing his thumb up to wipe through the blood, crimson a spreading stain across Hannibal's skin. Hannibal caught Will's wrist then, raised the other man's hand to his own lips, pulling the thumb into his mouth, sucking blood from the skin.

Will gasped just a bit at that, grabbed hold of Hannibal, and pulling him into a kiss. Hannibal kissed him back with equal fervour. Will spun their position then, pressing Hannibal back against the edge of the desk, biting at his lips, kissing down over the side of his jaw as he rolled their hips together.

Hannibal gasped, tipping his head back, allowing Will more access to his throat. Will nipped and sucked at skin, and in Hannibal's distraction, reached out with one hand, dipping into the

cup to grab a fistful of paper clips, which he dispensed neatly into his pocket before pulling back, smiling deviously up at Hannibal.

“Let’s go upstairs, yeah?”

Hannibal nodded, kissing Will once more, slower this time before taking him by the hand. Will followed Hannibal out of the room, the makings of a lock pick weighing heavy in his pocket.

*****

Will fucked Hannibal for the first time that night, laying on his stomach in the center of the mattress, propped up on his elbows. His back was a hard line of muscle as he rocked back into Will’s fingers, head sitting low between his shoulders, breath coming in hot, shallow pants.

He groaned aloud when Will added a third finger, a shudder running through him, cursing softly when the touch brushed over his prostate.

Will couldn’t help the little smile that crossed his lips as he leaned closer, speaking right against the shell of Hannibal’s ear. “Look at you.” He teased. “You’re practically *begging* for me, aren’t you?” He shook his head, feeling something akin to wonder. This man, *The Chesapeake Ripper* , who practically radiated power through his every act, surrendering so easily to him was almost too much.

Both men moaned in tandem when Will pressed in, burying himself to the hilt in one smooth stroke and Hannibal was gasping his name with something akin to reverence.

Will found a steady pace, snapped his hips sharp and fast, one hand g0ripping Hannibal’s hips hard enough to bruise. It wasn't long before Hannibal was coming apart beneath him, each thrust driving another moan from his lips. He was shaking just slightly, and on the next thrust he dropped down from his elbows, face resting flat on the mattress as Will fucked into him again and again.

When Hannibal came he clenched tight around Will, and Will came too, pressed deep into Hannibal before collapsing down onto him.

Will pulled out, and Hannibal rolled over beneath him, pulled him close, kissed him slow and long, needy as he slipped his tongue between Will’s lips. Will let him, parted his lips and received the affection willingly enough, until the hand petting his cheek was too intimate, and he had to pull away.

Hannibal held him close, sweat-soaked, sticking to him, pressing a kiss to his curls. He looked like he was about to say something stupid, like express his feelings.

“What a remarkable twist of fate that brought you into my office that day.” He murmured.

“Your blessing is my curse.” Will replied carefully. “You forget yourself, Hannibal.”

“Forgetting is a necessary consequence.”

“Forgetting is a choice you make. It’s easier for you to pretend you came into my life through chance, not through malicious and meticulous intent.”

“Tell me, do you not also choose to forget?”

“If I don’t ignore it now and again, I’ll lose my mind.” He wouldn’t meet Hannibal’s eye. “We both have guilt we need to alleviate through forgetting. How do you sleep with yours?”

He pulled away, and Hannibal didn’t reach for him as he turned off the bedside lamp, but he felt Hannibal’s eyes burning into him in the dark for a long time after that.

******

Will waited a long time for Hannibal’s breath to even out, waited even longer after. He sat up then, his eyes going to Hannibal’s back, the curve of his bare shoulder, the way the moonlight played across the sharp line of his cheekbone. He wondered a the lingering affection in the pit of his chest, and pressed his lips together. Then he rose from his bed, dressed quickly into the evening's discarded clothes, and crept towards the door. Hannibal didn’t stir when he opened it -left unlocked when they shared a bed- and he crept out into the hall, choosing not to shut it all the way behind him so as to avoid the click which he feared would wake the other man. The paper clips weighed heavy in his pockets, and he bit the inside of his cheek, hard enough to draw blood.

He paused in the kitchen, tucking a paring knife down into his pocket before making his way to the front door. He knelt before it, in the time he’d had that evening he had dwelled long in the bathroom, bending the clips into the shapes he needed, reforming them into poor excuses for lock-picks. They would work, regardless.

His heart was in his throat when the lock turned and the door clicked open, and then Will stepped out onto the street, savoured the night air for but a moment before he started to run.

Chapter End Notes

Bottom Hannibal? The filler porn chapter no one asked for but you all deserved???

Yeah, that's all this is actually

Will Will ever STOP? Nah, but would you?

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will didn't make it nearly as far he would have liked before he heard someone pursuing him. He ducked into an alley, slouched against a wall. He needed to take stock of the neighbourhood and determine what to do next. He needed somewhere to go that Hannibal wouldn't find him. He slouched back against the wall then, a choked sob falling from his lips as he did. His heart was beating too hard in his chest, turning his blood to fire in his veins. He held his breath for a long moment, he heard nothing and stepped out of his hiding place, walking out into the alley, he started to move again, to dart down the path.

A moment later a force like steel collided with the side of his body, knocking him into the wall. He opened his mouth to cry out, but a strong hand clamped over his lips, a forearm pressing down on his throat like a steel bar.

Will bit down then, hard enough to draw blood, tearing flesh between his teeth. Hannibal let out a pained growl beside his ear, but the arm around his throat didn't loosen, and his vision was starting to blue around the edges. He slammed back into the wall, knocking Hannibal against the brick, trying to drive him to let go, to loosen his hold even an interval but to no avail.

He resolved himself to one thing then, even if he failed, he'd go down putting up one hell of a fight.

Will slipped a hand, the one that wasn't clawing desperately at Hannibal's forearm, into his pocket, his hand wrapped around the handle of the paring knife and he didn't hesitate, driving the blade deep into Hannibal's thigh, just above the knee.

Hannibal cried out in pain, and his hold loosened just enough for Will to take in air again. He kicked back then, drove his heel forcefully into Hannibal's shin, finally breaking free of that hold. He started to run again, but he tripped over his own feet, still fuzzy from lack of oxygen, and Hannibal caught his ankle, yanking him back even as Will scrabbled desperately at the pavement in the alley, nails bending back painfully as the skin on the tips of his fingers was scraped raw.

Hannibal climbed on his back then, holding his wrists, one large hand clamping over his mouth and nose, and panic rose up in Will's chest at the lack of breath, he struggled desperately, felt his strength fading, and slapped his free-hand desperately against the pavement in one last attempt at surrender, because he didn't want to die here, in this desolate alley, bleeding and helpless.

And then he stopped struggling at the world went black around him.

*****

When he woke again, he was in the spare bedroom again, he was alone and his throat burned with every breath he took. His hands ached, and there was blood drying beneath his cracked nails. His heart raced at the memory of being dragged back across the pavement, thinking he would soon be dead at Hannibal's hand. He took stock of his injuries, a dark bruise on his shoulder, another across his hip.

Will sat up. He was alone and in that solitude found hopelessness. He wasn't used to being alone anymore, not for long. Hannibal had become such a presence in his life that Will found even now he yearned for what comfort the man provided.

He curled his lip at the painkiller and glass of water resting on the nightstand. He'd like to make a big show of not taking it, but his head pounded, and his throat burned from his close brush with asphyxiation. So he took it, savouring the cold wash of the water over his raw throat.

It wasn't long before Hannibal entered the room, a certain caution in his eyes as he made his way to stand beside the bed. There was a moment in which the two just looked at each other before Will spoke.

"And here I was hoping you'd decide I was more trouble than I was worth and just kill me."

"No, you weren't."

Will didn't bother to refute that remark. There was no point. Hannibal was right, of course.

"You broke my trust, Will," Hannibal said after a long pause.

Will scoffed. "Any trust between us was uneasy at best. You chose to be blind to that when you chose to forget. It's not as if I tricked you into thinking I was here by *choice* ."

"No, I suppose not," there was something raw in Hannibal's tone, and Will frowned at that. He seemed more *hurt* than angry. "You know I will have to lock you up again?"

"Around and around we go…" Will cleared his throat against the unpleasant crack in his voice. "Dizzy yet?"

"Not enough to lose footing," Hannibal assured him. "Are you?"

"Disorientation is an old friend," he paused for a moment. "I'm not gonna stop, Hannibal." He met the other man's gaze. "You've taken everything else from me. Fighting you is all I have left."

"What happened to compromise?"

"Fuck compromise," Will rolled over onto his good side, facing away from Hannibal. "You're the one pulling the strings still."

“You have far more power than you imagine, Will,” Hannibal murmured. Will didn’t reply, and a moment later he heard the door open and close, the lock clicking shut behind him.

*****

Beverly didn’t trust Dr. Lecter. She wasn’t sure what it was, everyone else seemed to admire him well enough, with his tailored suits and tailored mannerisms, and certainly he was charming enough, helpful, professional… but there was something decidedly *off* about the man. Micro-expressions, that was the word for it, minute twitches of features, each one mind-blowingly simple and yet, overwhelmingly telling to anyone who bothered to really *look* .

He was limping today, a small thing, but odd, the way he favoured his left leg over his right as he stood beside Jack, discussing yet another crime scene.

She approached him after Jack wandered away, smiling a friendly smile. “Alright?” she raised an eyebrow.

Lecter cast her a questioning glance.

“Your leg,” she elaborated. The corner’s of Lecter’s mouth twitched just a bit, nearly too fast to catch. “I noticed you were limping.”

“You have a keen eye, Miss Katz,” his smile was polite, if a bit insidious. “I had a fall, tripped on a bicycle my neighbour’s child left in the driveway. Foolish of me really.”

If he was lying, he was good, none of the usual tells were there. Why then did she feel so suspicious of him? “Must have been quite the fall.”

“Nothing too severe, I assure you.”

Before she could say anything else, Katz heard Price calling out to her and turned away. “Duty calls.” She made her way over to where the two men were bickering as they photographed the body. She could feel Lecter’s gaze on her back the entire time, and knew she was onto something.

*****

Things were uncomfortable at best, tense near to the breaking point at worst. Hannibal didn’t speak to him much, left Will in his room to his own devices most of the time, except when he brought him meals. They didn’t touch, not for days after, and Will hated how much he coveted, it, how he desired grab hold of the man every time they were in the same room, to cling to him and taste his skin.

Once their hands brushed when Hannibal handed him his lunch tray and Will felt it in his fingertips for hours afterwards.

It was at night that he missed Hannibal the most, and he felt foolish for it. He noticed the absence in his bed, missed the arms that wrapped around him. His nightmares returned and over-and-over he dreamt of the cabin, dreamt he was alone in the dark, listening to the rattle of the wind and the rain, to the howls of the stag in the dark, cold as he huddled close to the rapidly dimming fire.

It was from one such dream that Will woke to sounds in his bedroom. The creaking of floorboards. He sat up, blinking around the darkness of the room. It took a moment for his eyes to adjust, and he swore he made out the silhouette of someone in the room.

“Hannibal?” he called out, but there was a dread in his gut, the figure was too thin and nowhere near tall enough to be Hannibal.

It was at the lack of reply that he felt his blood run cold, and he slipped out from beneath the covers, reaching for the lamp on the bedside table to give him some sense of clarity.

A body smashed into the side of him, knocking him flying, sending the lamp smashing down onto the floor to his left. Will wrestled with the man atop him, trying to pry out of the grasp of a man he could not see but he knew from silhouette that it was not Hannibal. A blade came down close to his cheek, and Will narrowly avoided it falling in his eye, having it instead glance across the side of his cheek, cutting skin to stick in the floor beside his head.

Will reached for the blade, but it was knocked out of reach, and strong hands came to wrap around his throat, for the second time this week he found himself being strangled. He clawed at the hand, trying to break the grip, nails biting into skin before his eyes fell on the lamp laying on the floor to his left. He caught it and raised his arm, smashing it off the man’s head, hard enough to shatter porcelain.

The stranger cried out and his grip loosened enough for Will to roll him over, raising his fist, slamming it down into the other man’s face.

The blow sent blood spraying from the man’s lips, black in the moonlight that poured in through the window. He pulled his arm back, hit him again. Something woke inside him at the violence, months of pent up anger rearing its bloodthirsty head, and Will couldn’t stop himself, hit again-and-again, felt an ache in his knuckles, felt bone cave beneath his fist as he broke teeth.

The man swung at him with a knife again, and Will caught his wrist, twisted the bone, a crack like a gunshot filling the room followed by a sharp scream. A scream which abruptly cut off into a choked gurgle when Will drove the blade into the side of his neck, yanking forwards and opening the man’s throat. Blood sprayed across his face, and he froze then, staring down at the body beneath him, chest heaving as he caught his breath.

Blood seeped through his shirt as it cooled, drying sticky on his skin, and he closed his eyes for a moment, trying to quiet the beast that loomed up in his chest. He was horrified, less by

his action but more by how *cathartic* it had felt, and he sat in the darkness for a long moment, watching the life leave this strangers eyes.

The door opened then, Will didn't move. The light came on, casting his victim into better view and still Will stayed silent, staring blankly down at the floor as his mind started to put the pieces together. There was anger somewhere in the pit of his chest, but it was overshadowed by shock.

His name might have been said, Will didn't know for sure, but he knew his hand shook, saw it when he finally looked at the bloody knife, still clasped between his fingers. He dropped it then, watched it splash into the pool of blood forming on the hardwood.

Strong arms wrapped around the back of him, and Will slumped back into the touch, felt nimble fingers run through his hair, a string of comforting kisses pressed along the edge of his cheek. "Come back to me, Will," Hannibal whispered against his ear, and Will let out a long, shaky breath, his eyes falling shut for a long moment.

He didn't understand quite what had happened, but he knew Hannibal had planned it.

"I'm here," he whispered, and Hannibal kissed his cheek.

"Good," he pulled away some. "Come, let's get you cleaned up."

Will took the extended hand, nodded slowly. He couldn't stop thinking about the blood on the carpet. Someone would have to clean that up… no, the rug would have to be burned, it'd be too easy to find in the trash.

Hannibal lead him into a different bathroom, the one attached to his own room, and leaned over to turn on the shower. Will reached for the hem of his shirt, wanting to get the blood away from his skin, but his hands shook violently, and Hannibal pushed them aside, grabbing the hem and tugging it up over Will's head.

He clicked his tongue as he wiped the blood from the edge of Will's face, cleaning the cut. "Not too deep. A butterfly bandage should do."

Will was staring at the floor; kept staring at the floor as he let Hannibal clean the cut and bandage it.

"You'll need to shower," he paused. "Are you alright if I leave you a moment?"

Will nodded. He watched Hannibal leave, then turned to face the mirror, smiling hollowly at the reflection of a man he could not recognize.

*****

Hannibal wrapped the corpse of Randall Tier in the rug, it had soaked up most of the blood and he'd have to burn it, but at least the hardwood had been spared the blunt of the damage. He carried it down to the basement, dragged it into the rather large walk-in freezer at the center of the room, and left it there. He'd have time to attend to it further later on, for the moment he wanted to help Will, but more than that wanted to keep an eye on him, he would surely be volatile in these moments after taking Tier's life, and there was no real way of knowing what he would or would not do.

Will was not in the shower when he returned, he was standing by the sink, head slumped low between his shoulders. The shake had gone from him, and now he stood so still Hannibal wondered if he even breathed.

Hannibal approached slowly, and Will met his gaze in the mirror, he looked angry.

"You set this up," he said when Hannibal reached his shoulder. "You sent him to kill me. You wanted to watch."

"No, I sent him for you to kill."

"Why?" Will met his gaze in the mirror.

"An apology," Hannibal said, a hand coming to rest on his shoulder.

"You send someone to try to kill me as an apology?" Will seemed to understand, but seemed displeased in his understanding. "Who was he?"

"I think you know," Hannibal couldn't help but slide an arm around Will's waist. Will shrugged it off, and Hannibal didn't press.

He looked over one shoulder. "The one from the file."

"You detested him so," Hannibal smiled close to Will's neck.

"You call sending a man in to kill me an apology?" he growled. "I call it an act of revenge. You're petty because I tried to leave. I've driven you to emotionality."

"Even now you won't take the moment to admit you enjoyed it," Hannibal shook his head. "But I saw the look in your eyes when you gazed down at his body, I know that look Will, I've seen it in the mirror enough times."

Will's hand gripped the edge of the counter, knuckles going white from the strain. Then he turned, faster than would have been anticipated, and swung, fist knocking forcefully into the side of Hannibal's jaw, sending him reeling back a few steps.

Hannibal was angry for a moment, filled with the innate instinct to retaliate, until he saw the way Will cradled his hand close to his body, remembered the cracked, bloodied skin on his knuckles, and was overwhelmed by a sharp spike of concern.

He kissed his teeth, stepping closer, reaching tentatively to take Will's hand in both of his own. Will let him, but didn't meet his eye. "I deserved that, didn't I?" Hannibal raised Will's

hand to his lips, kissed those bloodied knuckles, before looking up to meet Will's gaze.

"You deserve worse than that."

"How did it feel, Will?"

"What? Punching you?"

"You know what I'm asking, playing the fool doesn't become you."

"It was intimate."

"Was it the same as Hobbs?"

Will shook his head, finally raising his gaze to meet with Hannibal's own. "It was so much *better* than Hobbs."

Hannibal felt his lips pull up in a smile at the words. "In this moment," he murmured, swaying just a little closer into Will's space, "you are at your most beautiful."

Will grabbed his face then, pulled him forwards, pressing their lips together in a bruising kiss. He left blood trailed across the side of Hannibal's face, up into his hair, down to the collar of his dress-shirt as he fumbled desperately with the buttons there.

Hannibal humoured him a moment, lips parting to allow Will to lick into his mouth as he was pressed up against the sliding glass door of the shower, hands all over his skin. His lips trailed over the side of Hannibal's neck as he tore at the shirt on his shoulders. It was an outpouring of emotion, anger, and adrenaline blending to form an intense sort of desire, and for a moment Hannibal believed Will would devour him whole, burning Hannibal too away in the wake of his own Becoming.

Hannibal lifted a hand then, pressing it to Will's chest, pushing him gently back. He kissed him on the mouth, slow and sweet before stepping back to slide the shirt off of his shoulders.

That seemed to bring Will back to himself a little, and the two stripped slowly, stepping into the shower. They stood close, kissing beneath the steady stream of water, washing blood from their skin, and Hannibal watched as the water ran in pinky-red rivulets down Will's abdomen, over his legs before swirling away down the drain. Will's face was pressed into the side of his neck.

"Hush, darling," he murmured, and turned off the water.

After they had cleaned away the blood, he took Will's hand, lead him to sit on the lid of the toilet, dabbed at his knuckles before pulling out gaze. He bandaged them carefully, then kissed him softly on the forehead. "What do you need, Will?" he asked.

Will just stood, pulled Hannibal close, kissing him sweetly, taking him by the wrist, a devious smile on his lips as he lead Hannibal out the door and into the bedroom.

*****

Will pushed Hannibal down onto the bed rather hurriedly, crawled up the bed to hover above him on all fours, leaning down to catch his lips in a heated kiss. Hannibal kissed him back, lips parting easily as he clung to Will's shoulders, pulling him closer. Will was still angry, of course he was, but the passion of that anger had been redirected into desire when he had seen the pure devotion in Hannibal's gaze. Kissing Hannibal was like breathing, and Will dropped down onto his elbows so they were chest-to-chest, wanting to pull Hannibal so close they fused into one being. He cried out sharply as pain shot through his shoulder, still sore and bruised, and he groaned through gritted teeth, dropping his head to rest in the cleft of Hannibal's shoulder.

"You're still healing," Hannibal murmured, running a hand over the back of Will's neck and into his hair. "Let me take care of you." Will nodded, and let Hannibal shift their position so that Will was laying on his back. He kissed him sweetly, tongue tracing across the back of Will's teeth, then pulled back, looking into his eyes. "What do you need from me, Will?"

"I need…" Will licked his lips, he knew what he wanted, but he was afraid to ask for it. "I need you," he slipped a knee up over Hannibal's hips, a suggesting clear in the gesture, "to take me out of my mind."

"You're sure?" Hannibal cupped his cheek, running a thumb over the bone there.

Will nodded, and Hannibal reached for the drawer. He took a bottle of lube in his hand, crouching over Will as he slipped the first finger in. Will let out a sharp little hiss at the sting, squeezed his eyes shut. Hannibal kissed his parted lips soothingly, nipped over the side of his jaw, trailing feather light bruises along the side of his neck.

"Perfect boy," he whispered against the side of Will's ear. "I'll make this so good for you."

Will moaned when Hannibal slipped a second finger in, and Hannibal slipped his other hand between their bodies, stoking Will's length slowly, as he did, he crooked his fingers, and Will's fingers bit hard into his shoulders. "Fuck," he let out a shaky breath.

"Language, darling," he crooked his fingers again, and Will let out another keening sound, rocking back into the touch.

"Please."

Hannibal caught Will's lip between his teeth. "Please what, love?" He slipped in a third finger, and Will spread his legs a bit wider, rolling his hips back into the touch, fucking himself on Hannibal's fingers.

God, the pet names should not be that arousing. "Fuck me."

Hannibal gasped breathlessly against the side of his neck, slicked up his length before pressing the head to Will's entrance. Will clung to him as he pressed in, thighs tightening

around Hannibal's hips, dragging him closer, until he was fully buried within Will's body. He slipped out, before pressing in once again. Will gasped, head tipping back as Hannibal continued to fuck him, slow and steady, tender even, whispering ministrations of affection in Will's ear as he kissed and sucked at the skin of his throat.

My sweet William. My perfect, darling boy. My heart. My love. Mine. Mine. Mine. Mine.

Over-and-over again, possessive, tender remarks, but for once Will was too far gone to bother refuting him.

Will was whining beneath him, one hand slipping up into Hannibal's hair, the other clinging to his shoulders for dear life, sure to leave red marks with the way his nails bit crescent marks into the skin there. Hannibal pulled back to kiss his lips again, swallowing up the little moans Will produced as he reached between their bodies to catch Will's length once more, stroking him in time with his thrusts.

Will kissed him back, he'd never felt so close to another person, and he never wanted to let go, even as he hated himself for it.

His nails broke the skin on Hannibal's back when he came, lines of red blood streaking over the length of Hannibal's spine.

Hannibal came shortly after, collapsing down onto Will, pulling him close, rolling them over so that he was laying atop Will's chest. He took Will's hand in his, brought each crimson finger to his lips, kissing each fingertip with something halfway between tenderness and ravenousness.

He kissed Will then, and Will allowed it, tasted Hannibal's blood on his tongue.

Hannibal wrapped his arms tight around Will, held him, kissed his cheek, his nose, his forehead, fingertips still trailing absently over Will's skin as though trying to feel every inch of his skin, to claim it. He was still half on top of Will, the weight pinning him to the bed, and Will imagined he wouldn't be getting up before morning, Hannibal hardly seemed in the mood to let go of him.

Will closed his eyes then, and it didn't take long for him to fall asleep.

Chapter End Notes

I LOVE AND SUPPORT AND STAN THE FUCK OUT OF BEVERLY KATZ
also you all were waiting for bottom will and i'm sorry I made you wait but you knew it would take a bit for him to come around

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

> I promise things Will get less porny and more plotty soon, but you try getting Hannibal Lecter to keep it in his pants, it's not easy, let me tell you

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will woke to lips roaming over the side of his neck, to possessive arms around his body, holding him taught against a broad chest. He groaned, wormed just a little closer, felt a hard, hot length pressed up against his backside.

“Good morning.” Will chuckled, he shifted in Hannibal’s arms, attempting to roll over only to find Hannibal’s grip holding him firmly in place, a low growl in his ear. Hannibal rolled his hips against Will’s back, one hand catching a nipple between finger and thumb, squeezing just a bit, and Will’s breath shook in the back of his throat as the touches grew more insistent. “God, you’re gonna be the death of me.”

“Only la petite mort.” His hand moved to sit low on Will’s stomach, light, teasing fingers tracing circles over the skin there. A whimper escaped Will’s lips and he tried once more to roll over, to do something other than just lay there, Hannibal’s hands all over him. At his attempt at motion, however, Hannibal’s free hand closed over his throat; a warning.

“Would you like this to continue?” Hannibal growled close to his ear.

“Yes.” Will replied breathlessly, unsurprised by his own lack of hesitation. Killing a man and fucking a serial killer in the same evening really served to lower one’s inhibitions.

“Then trust me.” The words were a warm breath across the shell of his ear.

Will nodded, stopped straining and found tension he’d been unaware of leaving his muscles as he pressed back into Hannibal. “Okay.”

“That’s my boy.” Hannibal purred, and Will shuddered at the words as he was flipped onto his stomach, Hannibal blanketing him, hard cock pressed into the cleft of his ass. His lips moved over Will’s neck, and he paused, inhaling sharply against the hollow of his throat.

“Still sniffing me then?” He couldn’t stop the teasing lilt of his voice.

Hannibal’s teeth found his shoulder as a retaliation for the taunt and Will bit his cheek to keep from crying out. He wondered if he was bleeding. Hannibal’s hips rocked against him, rough, possessive, and blunt nails scraped down the length of his spine, bursting blood vessels in their wake.

It was then that Will realized what Hannibal was doing, why this touch was so different from the tender lovemaking of the previous evening. He was marking Will; *claiming* him, leaving physical memories on his skin to prove to both of them that this was more than some fluke, that time-and-time again Will would crawl back into his bed and time-and-time-again Hannibal would welcome him with open arms.

Hannibal's lips moved down his back, tasting his skin, nipping at the knobs of his spine, leaving a trail of red marks in his wake. His hands found Will's hips, digging in, kneading, pulling him up onto his knees for better access. Will went willingly, tried to rise up onto his hands only to have one hand sliding up to the back of his neck, pressing his face roughly down into the mattress. It was a humiliating position, face in the pillow, ass on display, but he stayed like that, his cheeks heating as a few moments passed without Hannibal touching him, instead taking in the sight of him.

Fuck, he was turned on.

Hannibal's hands slid down his back, moved over his thighs, nails biting into the skin there as he dragged them back up, kneading gently at the flesh of Will's ass. Will gasped, pressing back into the contact, an involuntary twitch of his hips.

"Patience, darling." His lips pressed to the base of Will's spine before trailing down, mouthing over his left ass cheek, sucking a bruise into the place where it met with his thigh. Will let out a sharp cry at that, hands fisting in the sheets, red face buried in the crook of his elbow.

"Shit." He moaned as Hannibal scraped his teeth over the sensitive mark he'd just left. Then he bit down, teeth sinking into the meat of Will's ass hard enough to bruise. " *God* !" Will pressed his face further into his elbow in an attempt to muffle the sounds which so readily fell from his lips.

Hannibal's hands gripped either of Will's ass cheeks, spreading them apart, thumb dipping between, pressing against his hole. Will's breath hitched and he rocked back against the touch, pleading for something even as Hannibal pulled back.

"You're beautiful like this." Hannibal murmured, fingers digging into his skin. "Spread out, begging for me."

Will craned his head, glancing at Hannibal over one shoulder. "Trust me, I'm *far* from begging."

Hannibal said nothing, didn't have to because a second later the thumb was replaced by the light flick of a tongue, and Will groaned, dropping his head forward to rest against the sheets. "God, *Hannibal.* "

Hannibal hummed low in his throat and set to work, delving deeper, tongue expertly pressing into Will, each flick sending a wave of pleasure coursing through him. It wasn't long before Will was grasping at the sheets, pressing back, practically fucking himself on Hannibal's tongue.

He could do this forever, but at the same time wanted to be filled up so much more than he was. He wanted Hannibal to fuck him, not the gentle lovemaking of the previous evening, but something rough and primal; he wanted to be *claimed* . He wanted Hannibal to press into him until he couldn't remember his own name.

"Please." The word rolled from his lips without thought.

"Begging now, are we?" Hannibal slid up the length of Will's body, his breath hot on his ear.

"Fuck you."

"Now, Will," Hannibal murmured, chastising, "I don't think that's quite what you want."

"You're an asshole."

"And your not particularly well-mannered."

"Please." Will said again, voice breaking with the strain.

"Please, what?"

Fuck, Hannibal really wasn't gonna make this easy for him. He shifted his hips just a little, cock sliding over the cleft of Will's ass, teasing, and Will let out a shaky breath. "I want you to fuck me. Please. Not like last night though, I want…"

"You want me to hurt you?" Hannibal's words vibrated against the shell of Will's ear, sending a shudder through him "You want me to press inside you, work you open, rough and fast until you can't move without feeling the memory of me?"

"Shit." Will panted. "Yeah, that sounds about right."

"Very articulate." Hannibal pulled away then, and Will could hear him rummaging in the drawer for a moment. When he returned one slick finger found Will's entrance, light and teasing as it circled him. Will's breath hitched at the contact and he pressed back, immediately frustrated when Hannibal pulled away again, sucking his teeth. "Eager, are we?"

"Yeah well, don't sound so pleased with yourself."

Hannibal's fingers curled inside him, and Will let out a small sound whine. "Oh *fuck* ."

"Beautiful boy." Hannibal growled as Will rocked back into his fingers again. "You have no idea how you look to me right now, fucking yourself on my fingers, such a needy thing you are."

Will groaned low in his throat at the words. "Yeah, well I'm getting a bit tired of fingers."

"There we are, darling." Hannibal grinned, and a second later the thick head of his cock replaced his fingers. "I won't be gentle."

"Shut up and fuck me already."

Hannibal pressed in, rough enough to draw a sharp cry from Will, muffled by the pillow beneath his cheek. He barely had a moment to adjust before Hannibal pulled out, slamming back in drawing a sharp cry from Will tore at the sheets, biting his lips hard enough to draw blood. Hannibal fucked him at a relentless pace, the room quickly filling with their moans, and the slapping of skin on skin, and Will managed to push himself up onto all fours, rocking back to meet each of Hannibal's thrusts, hissing as a hand tangled roughly in his hair, jerking his head back, lips latching hungrily onto the side of his neck.

Hannibal changed their position then, dragging Will up to sit in his lap, so Hannibal's chest was pressed flush against his back. The angle pressed Hannibal deeper into him, and Will gasped, head falling back to rest against Hannibal's shoulder as he rose up, dropping back down to meet each thrust of Hannibal's hips, bracing his hands against his own thighs for some kind of leverage.

Hannibal's mouth moved over the side of Will's neck, with the clear intent to bruise, catching skin between his teeth with a possessiveness that Will knew shouldn't be as much of a turn-on for him as it was. His teeth caught Will's earlobe, a low growl rising up in his throat as he kept his relentless pace, and one hand rose to clasp over Will's throat, squeezing just a bit, pulling Will tighter against his body, as if he wanted to blur all lines which divided them into two beings.

Will was helpless to do much but take what Hannibal had to give him, reaching one hand back to tangle in Hannibal's hair, holding him close as his whole body shook with each rough thrust of Hannibal's hips.

"*Mine* ." The hand that wasn't on Will's throat slid down to wrap around his cock, stroking him rough and fast, in time with each thrust, and Will let out a choked cry, hand tightening in Hannibal's hair, hips bucking up into the touch, even as Hannibal slammed into him again and again, hitting his prostate with cruel precision.

"Fuck, I-" he stuttered, he was so close, "God! Yeah, yours, fuck! All yours." Will was barely even aware of the words falling from his lips as he came, spilling over Hannibal's fist.

Hannibal's teeth sunk deep into the place where Will's neck met his shoulder when he came, hard enough to draw blood, to make Will cry out from the pain, as he went limp, his weight supported by Hannibal's presence against his back. Hannibal shifted their position then, laying them side by side on the mattress and slipping out. Will winced at the telltale soreness, knew he'd feel the memory of Hannibal for days after, just like he'd promised he would.

Hannibal's lips were on his shoulder again, kissing blood from his skin, tasting him. "Perhaps I lost myself a bit." He murmured, examining the mark, there was still blood smeared across his lips, and Will shuddered just a bit at the image. Hannibal disappeared into the bathroom for a moment, returning with a sterile gauze pad, wiping away the blood, Will winced a little at the sting, but said nothing else. "It won't require stitches." Hannibal assured, a small smile tugging at his lips. "Though it will more than likely scar."

"You sound pleased." Will tipped his head to one side, allowing Hannibal to bandage the wound, letting his eyes fall shut for a moment.

“I am.” Hannibal admitted and Will looked up, surprised by the blatant honesty there. “You said you were mine, Will.” Hannibal elaborated. “And I marked you as such.” He reached out to cup the side of Will’s face, pressing their lips together in a tender, blood-stained kiss.

Will shut his eyes and let his head fall to rest against Hannibal’s shoulder, let himself be held close, in that moment realizing just how far he’d gone past the point of no return.

*****

Conversation over breakfast was awkward to say the least. Will had to admit, the discussion of what to do with a dead body was not something he’d like to do during a meal -especially while sharing that meal with a *cannibal* - but Hannibal seemed adamant they had the discussion now.

“I don’t much care *what* you do with him, Hannibal.” Will wouldn’t meet the man’s eyes over his eggs. “So long as you don’t fucking *feed* him to me.”

“It is not my place to decide what is done with this body.” Hannibal shook his head, he looked a little disappointed at Will’s refusal to indulge, but said nothing. “This is your kill. Your design.”

Will sighed, he knew what Hannibal wanted from him, and for a moment, his mind was flooded with an image so twisted, so darkly *beautiful* , that he couldn’t help the smile playing across his lips.

“What is it, Will?” Hannibal leaned closer. “What do you see?”

Will chewed his cheek for a long moment before taking the plunge, knowing full well he couldn’t come back from this.

“He wanted to be an animal.” Will said finally. “So let’s make him one.”

The smile that graced Hannibal’s lips was perhaps the most beautiful thing Will had ever seen.

*****

Hannibal stood beside Jack Crawford, staring up at the body. He couldn’t help but glance sideways at the agent, fascinated by the man’s reaction to his and Will’s work; his brow furrowed, his mouth a harsh, twisted line.

“It’s Randall Tier.” Jack said after a moment. “Or at least it used to be.”

Now it was parts of him, skin stretched crudely over the skeleton of a sabre tooth tiger.

“Almost poetic.” Hannibal couldn’t help himself. “Whoever are killer was, he knew Randall Tier intimately enough to know what he desired most. This is humiliation, Jack.” There was a swelling of pride in his chest as he thought of just how far his Will had come in these past months, the body here a tribute to that transformation.

“Do you think it’s the Ripper?” It was Katz who asked, clever as she was, and Hannibal was beginning to look at her as something to worry about.

“Hard to be sure.” Jack said slowly. “Display fits the M.O., but it doesn’t feel quite right… The Ripper never takes this much.”

Hannibal did smile then, couldn’t help the slight twitch of his lips at the notion that they could be right and wrong simultaneously. In a way, this was the work of the Ripper, but merely as a facilitator; an instructor. The design had been Will’s in its entirety, and what a lovely design it was.

“If only Will Graham were here.” Jack murmured, seemingly more to himself than to anyone else in the room. Beside Hannibal, Katz shifted, seeming uncomfortable. “He’d have the answers.”

You’re more right than you know, agent Crawford. Hannibal thought with a small twitch of his lips.

In his mind’s eye, he saw Will, brow furrow with intense focus as he cut into Randall Tier’s frozen flesh, Hannibal pressed against his back as he helped him through each precise cut, whispering assurances in his ear, kissing blood from his skin.

In that moment, Hannibal wanted nothing more than to get home again, to hold Will - *his* Will- close, kiss his lips, strip away the layers until there was nothing between them, until they were one man rather than two.

Hannibal gazed at Randall Tier’s body and he thought about what he would make for dinner.

Chapter End Notes

again, plot is coming, I swear on my life

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

> Wow, it really has been a whole-ass month, huh? I'm so terribly sorry, and I'm also sorry this one is kinda short but school is literally trying to kill me.

Someone had punched Dr. Lecter in the jaw; a clean right hook, leaving a dark bruise blooming up beneath his flesh. It wasn't a coincidence, not after his limp the other day; someone was dealing damage to the doctor, had hurt him more than once now, she doubted therapy was that hazardous a career. Still Beverly had no proof but a few arbitrary injuries, easily explained away. But there was something so smug about him now, as he looked up at the body of Randall Tier, something in the near imperceptible twitch of his jaw when Jack mentioned Will's name that turned her blood to ice.

She had a thought then, something which twisted her stomach, and she knew she needed to talk to Jack.

She waited until he was away from Lecter to approach him, pressing her lips together in a thin line.

"Jack, there's something we need to factor in to this."

"What is it, Katz?" Jack was frowning at her, he seemed distracted. Beverly wasn't surprised.

"If this *is* the ripper, which I think we both believe to be the case, we have to take into account that this is the first body we've found since…"

"Since he took Will." Jack nodded slowly. "I'm aware."

"Have you given any thought to why this one is different?" She raised an eyebrow, she hated even saying the words aloud but they had to consider it.

"You're not saying Will did this." He shook his head in disbelief.

"Not exactly…" Beverly pressed her lips together, "or at least not *willingly* . But we never learned his reasoning behind keeping Will alive."

"So…?"

"What if…" She sighed, "Jack what if he's trying to find someone who will understand him? What if he's trying to make himself a partner?"

“Then it’s worse than we thought.” Jack said slowly. “Much, much worse.”

******

Hannibal was feeling very pleased with himself indeed, humming softly along with the music as he cooked, a smile playing across his lips. His skin was buzzing with anticipation of the of the evening’s meal, he had gotten a number of good cuts of meat from Randall Tier, tonight he was cooking loin, the rest he had packaged and frozen, hoping it would last him some time. Of course, he had respected Will’s wishes not to be fed what remained of Randall, and had purchased some lamb which he would cook for Will.

This evening is important to him, important for Will, a celebration of his change, his Becoming. Everything had to be perfect.

******

It was a little odd to Will that Hannibal felt the need to pick out an outfit for him, but he’d been adamant, and Will had allowed it, as this whole thing seemed important to him. He came down the stairs then, dressed in the suit Hannibal had brought for him, dark blue material that clung to him in all the appropriate ways. He was unexpectedly nervous about this whole affair. Hannibal turned when he heard Will walking down the stairs, and for a moment there was something like awe in his eyes as he swept his gaze over Will.

Will reached the bottom of the stairs, and found he couldn’t quite meet the intensity of that gaze. “How do I look?” He said, because he needed to break the silence.

Hannibal smiled, and Will had never seen such open affection in his eyes. “If I saw you everyday forever, Will, I would always remember this time.”

“I thought it’d be black.” He said, in lieu of a response, because he wasn't sure what to say.

“Black is a symbol of mourning. Are you in mourning?” Hannibal raised an eyebrow.

“It seems fitting, given death is what brought us to this.”

“This is a celebration.” Hannibal shook his head. “Randall Tier was your sacrifice, his life forfeit in the path of your becoming.” He smiled, taking Will by the hand, leading him into the dining room. “Sit.” He said, pulling out a chair for the other man.

“Why blue then?” Will was stuck on it, glancing curiously up at Hannibal as he sat down.

Hannibal leaned in close, pouring burgundy wine into Will's glass, his nose dipping into Will's curls for a moment as he breathed him in. "I thought it was obvious."

Will turned to frown at Hannibal, not sure what the other man expected of him.

"The colour brings out your eyes."

"I should have known there'd be romantic overtures behind your motivations."

"Am I so easy to read?"

"Like a book." Will tipped his head back, and Hannibal caught his lips in a short, sweet kiss. Hannibal disappeared into the kitchen for a moment then, coming back with their food already plated. "Looks delicious." Will raised an eyebrow. "Lamb?"

"Yes."

"Sacrificial." Will responded. "I wouldn't let you feed me my kill, so you had to do something more symbolic."

"This is an important evening for you, Will. I wanted everything to be perfect." Hannibal smiled at him across the table.

"For you, or for me?"

"For both, preferably." Hannibal's eyes were gleaming, warm, affectionate. "How did I do?"

"It's perfect." Will hummed, smiling at Hannibal as he sipped his wine. His eyes fell to the meat on Hannibal's plate, different from his own. "But not for you."

"This dinner is not for me." Hannibal never broke gaze. "It is a celebration of your achievements."

There was such earnestness in his eyes, and Will felt something spread warm through his chest. He raised the glass to his lips then, draining it of wine as an idea arose in the back of his mind. He pushed his chair back then, and stood, Hannibal watched with a slight furrow in his brow as Will stepped around the side of the table, standing beside Hannibal's chair for a moment.

Hannibal remained silent, looking up at him with bright, curious eyes.

Will reached down, plucking the fork from where it sat in Hannibal's hand. He swallowed then, spearing one piece of meat -of his own kill- on the tines. Hannibal watched intensely and Will held his gaze as he raised the fork to his lips, he chewed slowly, and he savoured the flavour. It wasn't that different from any other meat really, if he didn't think about what it was. His eyes drifted shut for a moment, opening again at a hand brushing lightly over his cheek.

Hannibal was standing close to him then, their foreheads nearly touching as he met Will's eye, the fondness in his smile glittering in the corners of his eyes. "With all my knowledge

and intrusion, I could never entirely predict you." He murmured, his tone tinged with awe. "I can feed the caterpillar, and I can whisper through the chrysalis but what hatches is beyond me, and follows its own nature."

Will smiled then, feeling warmth flow through him as he moved a little closer, pulled in by the magnetism of Hannibal's eyes. "You can't predict me because you can't reduce me to a set of influences." He smiled then, knew there was something predatory about the expression. "I've given up good and evil, for behaviourism."

There was a moment then where the two stared at each other, electricity seeming to linger on the air, static before a storm. The tension snapped when Hannibal pressed forwards, hand catching around the back of Will's neck, pulling their lips together in a desperate kiss. Will's back hit the table, sharp wood biting into his skin, and his elbow hit the wine glass where it rested beside Hannibal's plate, knocking it askew, spilling dark liquid across the table, dripping over the side down onto the hardwood.

He raised his hands as he broke off the kiss, wine stained his fingertips like blood as he moved to cup Hannibal's cheek. Hannibal caught his wrist, brought the hand to his lips, and sucked wine from each fingertip, before leaning forwards to kiss Will again, hands clinging to his shoulders with a quiet sort of desperation. It felt as if he'd tear through Will's skin if he tried to pull away now.

"I've made a mess of dinner." Will chuckled.

"And yet I find it impossible to care." Hannibal smiled against his lips as he spoke.

Will kissed him again.

*****

Laying in the dark, tangled up with Hannibal's head on his chest, Will stared at the ceiling. He felt warm and soft, and his lids hung heavy over his eyes as his fingers carded through Hannibal's hair. "They're getting closer to you, aren't they?" He said, and Hannibal pressed a soft kiss to his chest.

"Yes."

"What happens when they find you? When this perfect little world you've built for us comes crumbling down?" It was a thought that had been echoing in his mind for some time, something he couldn't quite reconcile with his reality.

"When our time runs out, I will flee. I will not allow myself to be caught." He paused. "I would not survive it, locked up in a hospital, analyzed…"

"No, you'd hate that." Will almost laughed at the image. "Especially knowing you could do their jobs better than they can."

Hannibal huffed a laugh and held him a little tighter.

“And what about me?” Will couldn’t help it, he found it hard to see what his life would be after Hannibal, some part of him knowing he couldn’t go back to the way things were.

Hannibal sighed then, the sound was forlorn. “With my identity revealed, I will have no reason to hold you captive. You can return to the life you’ve missed. Do your job, teach your classes… sit on your porch and listen to the rain.”

Will let the images run through his head, but felt something heavy in the pit of his chest, even at the notion of returning to freedom. His freedom was a lonely one, afterall. “If you love something, set it free.” He murmured, more to himself than to Hannibal.

“If it comes back to you, it’s yours.” Hannibal finished. He changes there position then, rolling to lay on his side so they were face to face, and though Will couldn’t make out his features in the dark, he could hear the smile in his voice. “Would you come back to me, Will?”

Will was silent at that, he couldn’t answer, because he wasn't sure what the answer was. “It doesn’t matter anyway.” He said instead.

“Why not?”

“You don’t love me. You’re not capable of love.” The words felt wrong even as they came from his lips, but Will refused to take them back.

“Aren’t I?” There was hurt just underneath Hannibal’s tone, well-hidden, but not well enough.

“Love is selfless, you covet. If you loved me you’d turn yourself in for me.”

“You ask too much of me.”

“I ask for reciprocity. You’ve taken my freedom from me, I only ask that you’d be willing to the same.”

Hannibal slid up the length of his body to cup Will’s face in his hands, looking down into his eyes in the darkness of the room. “I adore you, I’d give anything for you. You accuse me of having no capacity for love, but you are wrong, I can love, I have loved, though the occasions on which I’ve felt such love can be counted on one hand, I’m afraid. But I do love you, Will, more than I’ve ever loved anything.”

Will felt too much then, had to break eye contact, but Hannibal held him close, leaned in to press their lips together. Will allowed it for a moment, then pulled back, rolling over, facing away from Hannibal even as he pressed back against his chest.

“Goodnight, Hannibal.” Will whispered, and his voice shook with the words.

Hannibal’s arms came to wrap around the middle of Will, holding him tighter than was necessary, as though he feared waking up alone. “Goodnight, Will.” He sighed against the

skin of Will’s shoulder.

Neither man spoke again, but each lay awake for hours, lost in his own thoughts.

Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

> ya boy is back! buckle up for dogs, murder, and smarty pants extraordinaire, Beverly Katz

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The problem with this newfound domesticity, Will noted with some displeasure, was the loneliness. It was jarring for him, he wasn't used to missing people, and her certainly didn't like admitting to himself just how much he missed *Hannibal* of all people.

Still, he missed him nonetheless, a desperate kind of yearning each day when Hannibal left in the morning, rolling around to the evening when he stepped back through the the door to catch Will in his arms. And each day, Hannibal would kiss him sweetly and call him darling and tell him about the plans he'd made for dinner that evening.

He missed his dogs still, but he had come into a sort of comfort with his current life. It couldn't last forever, he knew, but for now was fine. For now, Will realized, he felt more comfortable around Hannibal then he'd ever felt around another person, laying with his head in the man's lap while he read, his fingers brushing softly through Will's hair.

He knew it wasn't healthy. Really, how could it be? But each night he curled up in Hannibal's arms, and drifted off, and each morning he woke and he wasn't alone. He'd spent far too much of his life being alone.

"You're always so affectionate when I come home." Hannibal whispered against the bare skin of Will's shoulder one evening. "Almost as if you miss me."

"It's not easy, you know." Will craned his head back to look at Hannibal over his shoulder. "Being alone all the time."

Hannibal hummed his assent, pressing a small kiss to the nape of Will's neck. "I miss *you* . All day I think of returning to you, having you in my arms."

Will turned then, looking up at Hannibal with a small smile on his lips. "I'm here now, aren't I?"

"So you are." Hannibal leaned in, catching Will's lips in a kiss.

"What are you gonna do about it?"

It did not take Hannibal long to pull Will into bed with him.

Afterwards they lay together in silence for a long time, facing one another across the pillow. Hannibal extended a hand, sliding the tips of his fingers along the scar on Will's neck, the mottled imprint of teeth, a fond smile playing across his lips.

"You're on my skin." Will murmured, his gaze flicking up to Hannibal's face. "I'm not on yours."

"The wound to my leg left a scar." Hannibal reminded him. "Though I suppose a less noticeable one." His gaze flicked up to meet Will's. "Does that bother you?"

"I don't know." Will responded honestly.

"It shouldn't."

"Why not?"

"Because, dear Will," Hannibal's hand slid up to cup his cheek, "you're in my blood, something deeper than skin, wouldn't you say?"

Will responded by pulling Hannibal forwards into another kiss. He bit down on Hannibal's lip then, hard enough to break the skin, to taste blood on his tongue. Hannibal inhaled sharply, but didn't pull away. Will broke the kiss after a moment, smiling against Hannibal's lips.

"You enjoy making me bleed a little too much." Hannibal murmured.

"Then stop me." Will retorted.

"Never." Hannibal whispered, and kissed him again.

*****

It was a week later when Hannibal came into the room where Will was reading, an odd sort of smile on his face. Will looked up from his book and frowned. "I know that face. If I turn on the news, am I gonna see another corpse?" He raised an eyebrow.

"You think me so foolish as to leave the FBI another clue so soon after Randall?" Hannibal raised an eyebrow. "I thought you knew me better than that by now."

Will just snorted. "Oh don't act all offended, you like to dangle yourself *just* out of reach, makes it more fun for you."

Hannibal just smiled at that, smug.

"But you are up to something, you have that look in your eye and it's making me nervous."

“Come with me.” Hannibal said, instead of offering an answer, and Will frowned, but followed him. It was only when they reached the door to the den and Will heard the telltale scrape of claws on plastic and a high whine that he felt something flip in his chest, a smile rising to his lips before he could stop it.

“Hannibal, is that-” he cut himself off with a swallow because Hannibal was watching him intently, that unbridled sort of affection rising up behind his eyes, and yes, Will realized. It was exactly what he thought it was.

He pulled open the door to the den, and there she was, a brindle mastiff puppy, who wagged her tail with such tenacity at the sight of him that her whole body moved with it. She whined again, the sound more excited now than sad, pawing at the door to the cage Hannibal had put her in.

Will couldn’t stop the high sound in his own throat as he crouched down in front of the kennel to undo the latch. The dog came running out, leaping into his arms, her little body still wiggling with every wag of her tail. “Hello beautiful.” Will murmured, planting a kiss to the top of her head. The dog responded by throwing her head back to lick at his face, her paws on his chest as she squirmed closer into his arms.

He looked up at Hannibal as he held the dog close to his chest, and he could swear the other man looked nervous, his hands clasped behind his back as he watched Will intently.

“Thank you.” Will said, and he was startled by the earnestness of his tone. “Hannibal, this is…” He started to choke on the words, because tears were welling up behind his eyes, so Will turned and buried his face into the dog’s fur, smiling as she licked the salt from his skin.

A moment later he felt a hand on his shoulder, and he didn’t look up because he didn’t trust himself to in that moment, instead he just leaned back into the warm presence of the other man at his back, waiting until he found his words.

“Why?” He said, when he could speak again.

“You were lonely.” A pause. “I couldn’t stand to see how you hurt when you spoke about missing your own dogs.”

Will did turn then, wrapped an arm around Hannibal’s neck and pulled him into a kiss. It was short lived, Hannibal stiffening when the puppy decided to lick across his cheek, and Will could only laugh at the distress in his expression, because for a moment, things felt okay, and for a moment, he could pretend this whole situation was normal, domestic even. He could pretend Hannibal was a long-term partner surprising him with a puppy, instead of a captor consoling a lonely captive.

The problem, of course, was how attached Will found himself getting to that particular idea.

*****

It was nearly two months later, when Will said something which truly startled Hannibal.

Hannibal was sitting on the couch when it happened, reading, but only somewhat, more than that he found himself watching Will over the brim of his book as he sat on the floor, scratching Maggie's ears each time she followed his commands, a broad smile across his face.

Will looked up at him then, still smiling that smile, and Hannibal had to admit, he was quite smitten with the man, at least to himself. "What's that face for?" Will asked, and Hannibal merely sighed, closing his book and continuing to watch Will.

"I've never seen you as happy as you are with her." Hannibal admitted, a small frown forming on his lips. "I'm sorry for what I've done to limit that happiness."

Will stood then, and the dog watched him with curious brown eyes as he approached Hannibal, holding out a hand. Hannibal took it, and Will pulled him to his feet. "Can I tell you something?" Will whispered, close to his lips, and Hannibal nodded.

"Anything." He meant it more than he thought Will could imagine.

"I can see you trying your best, I want to hate you, but I can't, not anymore." His breath ghosted across Hannibal's cheek as he leaned in to whisper directly in his ear. "In fact, sometimes I feel as though I'm glad I met you."

Hannibal felt himself inhale sharply, and he wrapped his arms around Will, pulling him closer, burying his face into the side of his neck and keeping him close, breathing him in.

"How about I put Maggie in her cage and we go upstairs?" Will pulled back to look at him, and he really was the most beautiful person Hannibal had ever known.

"Alright."

They made slow, tender love that evening, clinging desperately to one another, Will bit down on Hannibal's neck when he came, not breaking skin, but leaving a mark high enough to peak out above a shirt collar. They lay together a long time afterwards, neither man seeming to stray far across the bed from the other. Will kissed him slowly in the aftermath, and Hannibal held him close, fingers threading into the dark curls at the nape of his neck, breathing him in.

After as they lay face-to-face, foreheads pressed together, Will surprised him yet again.

"I want to do it again." He murmured.

Hannibal frowned, not sure what Will was attempting to say, or perhaps not ready to jump to conclusions. He waited.

"I want to send them a message."

“Of course, my darling.” Hannibal ran a hand over his cheek tenderly. “What message is that?”

“I want them all to know the truth about us. What you’ve done to me, and the ways I’ve changed you.”

Hannibal moved forwards then, rolled Will onto his back and kissed him deeply. Will sighed into his mouth, hummed contentedly as Hannibal moved down the side of his neck. “I adore you.” Hannibal whispered, kissing over his jaw. “Anything you want.”

Will grabbed Hannibal’s head and pulled it back so that he could meet his eye. “I know.” He murmured, and kissed him again.

*****

When Beverly got a call about a body, described as a Caucasian male, dark hair, average height and weight, she felt more terror than she had ever before. She was glad to not be pulled over, going at the speed she was as she raced to the crime scene, stepping under the tape to where she saw Jack and Jimmy were examining the body.

“Is it him?”

“No.” Jack said, with a quick shake of his head. “But the choice was deliberate, it looks to much like him not to be.”

“He’s toying with us.” She says finally. “He wants to wave Will right in front of us, so he can snatch him away again.”

“You’ll want to take a better look at this.” He says after a long pause. “I think it’s worse than that.”

The corpse, when Beverly got a look at it, was truly something. Suspended by fishing wire and hooks in the skin, the man was held aloft, naked from the waist up, except a single piece of white fabric tied around his waist. The right arm was held aloft in front of him, and in his upturned hand was a human heart, the blood which dripped from it seemed artfully placed, as no other part of the body was stained with blood. The chest cavity was opened, and flowers had been stuffed into it, red and white blossoms.

“What’d he take?” Katz asked, a frown behind her eyes.

“Hard to tell yet, but we think based on the empty chest cavity, it was his lungs.” Jimmy replied.

“Took his breath away.” Beverly murmured, but she was uncertain of what take from that.

Before she could further elaborate on that, a familiar face arrive at Jack's shoulder. Dr. Lecter had been called into consult, his eyes dark, and untelling.

"What's your opinion on this, doctor?" Jack asked.

"There's a tenderness to it." He said after a long moment, Beverly watched him out of the corner of his eye, curious. "It's almost affectionate. I'd say he's trying to communicate the nature of his choice of taking Will."

"The ripper's in love?" He asked, raising an eyebrow. He sounded sick at the mere thought of it.

"Or he thinks he is." Beverly added quietly. "Obsession and love run a thin line with psychopaths… I doubt he's capable of love. At least in the conventional sense."

Out of the corner of her eye, Lecter's jaw clenched, and unease twisted in her gut.

"Either way, I think the sooner we get Will back the better. For his sake."

"There's uh," Jimmy piped up, looking uncomfortable. "There's a bite mark, left side right at the junction between neck and shoulder." He pressed his lips together. "Broke skin."

"That's not characteristic of the ripper…" Beverly shook her head. "He hates his victims, sees them has pigs. He's never bitten before, it's too messy, too…"

"Intimate." Lecter finished.

"*Possessive* ." Beverly responded.

For a moment she saw a shift in Lecter's features, something cold and sharp behind his eyes for just a moment before he returned to his calm.

Beverly swallowed hard, something clicked in her mind then, pieces she had finally putting themselves together. Hannibal's injuries, the look in his eye, the way he smirked when he said Will's name.

She had no proof but an inkling, and so she supposed she'd have to do something drastic.

Chapter End Notes

i'm so sorry, it's been weird but i'm back and trying not to lose my shit anymore, so here, have some plotty shit.
buckle up pals, it's gonna get wild in here.

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

i'm here, I'm queer, I'm updating.
For those of you worried i would kill beverly, rejoice! she lives!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I’d ask how it went, but you look smug enough that I don’t have to.” Will was sitting low in a chair in the living room, Maggie’s head rested on his knee, and he scratched her ears absently. She looked up when she saw Hannibal, whining excitedly, her tail thumping as she crossed the room to greet him, tripping just a bit over her legs, which had not yet become proportionate to her form. Hannibal patted her head a few times, let her lick at his fingers before he shrugged off his coat, hanging it by the door.

“Jack Crawford was as displeased as he was clueless.” He crossed the room, stopping in front of the armchair, bending to catch Will’s lips in a kiss. “He trusts my opinion intrinsically.”

“Who better to speculate about a murder than the man responsible for it?” Will responded, raising an eyebrow.

“One of the men responsible.” Hannibal reminded chidingly. “No sense in refuting your own participation in that act.”

“I guess not.”

He moved to pull back from Will, only to find the man’s hand wrapped around his tie, holding him close. Hannibal smiled a bit, the memory of that evening playing clear in his mind. Will had no interest in drawing things out, savouring the kill the way Hannibal enjoyed so profoundly, however, he had little hesitation as sliced the man’s throat, Hannibal’s hands guiding his wrists, showing him the most efficient way to do it.

“To deny such beauty, I think, would be more criminal than the act itself.”

“Your concerns value aesthetics over ethics, Hannibal.” Will replied.

“Ethics become aesthetics.” Hannibal pressed another kiss to his lips. “Would you like to let go of my tie now?”

“Not particularly.” Will tugged a little harder, and if Hannibal hadn’t seen the gesture coming, he might have lost footing, fallen into the other man’s lap. As it was, he braced himself on the arms of the chair, bent low over Will, unable to stop the smile playing across his lips.

“I need to start dinner.” He chided, but there was little conviction behind the words, Hannibal merely putting up a fight for the sake of appearances, knowing at the end of it, he’d give Will whatever he asked for.

*****

The days passed in steady tandem after that. Will thought often of the man he’d killed, an act which while regrettable had been a necessary evil. He had Hannibal’s complete trust now, and no matter how this ended, it would be in his favour. He had made the death quick, hadn’t wanted the man to suffer, if anything, Will wondered at the fact that he didn’t feel worse about the whole thing.

He sat alone in the den one evening, a little over a week later, he had a book open on his knee, he thought he’d read more books in his stint as Hannibal’s prisoner than he had in his entire life, or at least since college.

It was as he turned the page, that Maggie, who had been laying on the rug in front of the fire, lifted her head, a small yap falling from her lips. “Hush.” Will tsked at her, and she looked at him for a moment before barking again, more insistently. “What’s the matter, girl?” He stood, there was an odd feeling in his gut then. He shushed her, and she sat at his heel with a short whine before falling silent.

Someone was moving in the house.

Will stepped out of the den, curious. He closed the door to the quietly behind him when he saw that no light was on. He paused a moment, and when he didn’t hear Hannibal calling out, his curiosity spiked, and he stayed quiet, slowly making his way down the hall towards the source of the noise.

Behind him, Maggie scratched insistently at the door, a low whine rising from her throat. He hoped she didn’t mark up the door frame, Hannibal would have a fit.

He made his way further down the hall, down the three steps into the living room. One step creaked beneath his foot, and the next moment Will found himself face-to-face with the barrel of a gun.

His eyes went wide when he noticed the familiar face, the first familiar face he’d seen since all of this had begun. His jaw fell open and his heart leapt into his throat. “Beverly?”

“Will?” A moment later her arms were around him, she pulled him close, he wrapped his arms around her, holding onto her for dear life. “Oh my god, Will, I was worried I’d never see you again.”

Will felt tears prick up behind his eyes, and buried his face in the side of her neck. “Shit, Bev.” His voice shook with it. “I was so alone for so long, I was worried I’d ever see another

face.” He pulled back to look at her, a furrow in his brow. “How did you figure it out?”

“Followed my gut.” She grinned, but it was half hearted at best. “I tried to think how you would think. Plus a psychiatrist shouldn’t have that many injuries, it’s not a dangerous job. I assume he can thank you for those?”

Will chuckled, shaking his head. “It’s what he deserves.”

“What’s been going on, Will?” She frowned then, her eyes dropping to his open collar. “Was that-” she reached out to touch the mottled mark on Will’s neck, dark red and puffy as it healed, he flinched when her hand came close, and she dropped it immediately. “Oh Will, what has he done to you?”

“Bev there isn’t time for this. He’ll be back soon” He shook his head, he didn’t want to talk about this, his hand had tugged the collar over the mark and held it there.

“You’re right.” Beverly nodded. “We have to go, we have to get you out of here.”

Will shook his head. “I can’t.”

“What are you talking about?”

“You don’t get it.” Will nodded. “If you take me out of here now, he’ll know he’s caught. He’ll make a run for it, slip through the cracks and you’ll never catch him.”

“Will no.” Beverly’s voice cracked just a bit. “I can’t leave you.”

“You have to, Bev.” He replied putting a hand on her shoulder. “And I think you’re brilliant enough to know I’m right.” He put a hand on her cheek, smiling affectionately. “Tell Jack you found me, come back as soon as you can.”

“I will, I promise.”

There was the sound of a car pulling up in the driveway and Will swore. “Back door now, come on. I assume you have a lockpick.”

She nodded. He caught her wrist, dragging her towards the door, quiet as he slipped her into the dining room. Hannibal called his name, and Will tucked Beverly back behind the wall. “Stay here, wait, I’ll deal with him, you get out first opportunity.”

She nodded, her eyes were wide and fearful, but she looked more concerned for him than anything.

Will crept down the hall then, opening and shutting a door to simulate the sound of him exiting the den and calling out. “I’m here.”

Hannibal stepped close, sliding and arm around Will’s waist and pulling him into a kiss. “Where’s Maggie?” He murmured. “She usually greets me as I come through the door.”

“I locked her in the den, she was napping, and I uhh…” he fiddled absently with Hannibal’s tie, using it to pull him close, embarrassed that Beverly could hear this. “I missed you.”

“Have you?” Hannibal raised an eyebrow. “What’s to be done about that?”

Will kissed him again, a heated thing, passionate, and quickly finds himself being shoved back against the wall, one of Hannibal’s hands gliding absently over Will’s throat, a deliberate movement.

“Let’s go upstairs.” Will said, by means of answer, and Hannibal smiled against his lips.

“I’d love to, my dear.”

It worked like a charm, as Will had known it would, tugging Hannibal along by his tie until they reached the bedroom where he found himself abruptly shoved against the doorframe, one broad hand on his hip, and the other on his throat. Will gasped when Hannibal flexed his fingers a little tighter around his neck. “Not quite what I had in mind.” He grinned.

“What then, darling?” Hannibal replied smoothly.

Will lifted his hand, caught Hannibal’s wrist and pulled it away from his throat. Hannibal let him, his eyes glimmering, pupils blown wide as Will gripped his wrist hard for a moment, then abruptly switched their position, pushing Hannibal back against the wall, pinning his wrists above his head.

“Brash boy.” Hannibal smiled at him, a hungry, desperate thing.

“You don’t seem to mind much.” Will smirked, leaning close enough that their lips nearly brushed. Hannibal leaned in, trying to close the gap, but Will leaned back again, pressing a bit harder on Hannibal’s wrist, his smile widening just a bit. Objectively, Hannibal was stronger than him, they both knew that, still it was a fun game to play, wrapping Hannibal around his finger, seeing how tight he could wind him before he gave him what he wanted.

“How could I mind?” Hannibal licked his lips. “I love you like this, when you find your power, take what you want, you are at your most beautiful.”

“You’ve said that before, in reference to me taking life.”

“In both moments you seize your power, merely in different ways.” Hannibal replied smoothly. “Though when turned on me, I much prefer this version.”

Will crushed their lips together then, a messy, wild thing, teeth and tongue and blind possession. Hannibal had always been possessive. Will wondered at when the same had become true for him, when his violent impulses had changed from the urge to do harm into the desire to claim what was his.

They broke apart, Will pulling Hannibal’s lips between his teeth. He released his wrists then, and stepped back, pulling him once more by his tie towards the bed. Hannibal shed his jacket as they went, surprising Will by letting it fall to the floor when he usually folded it so neatly.

Will kissed him again, releasing his tie to open the buttons of his waist coat, sliding that off his shoulders as well.

“You wear too many fucking layers.” Will growled as he fumbled to undo Hannibal’s tie, the knot more complicated than anything he knew how to tie himself.

Hannibal chuckled, raising his own hands, untying the knot with practiced ease. When he had finished, Will pushed him back onto the bed. Hannibal sat back without protest, propped up on his elbows, looking at Will with desire plain across his features. Will crawled up the bed towards him, leaned close enough to kiss as his hands worked the buttons open on his shirt. “I wanna fuck you tonight.” He growled, and heard Hannibal’s breath hitch in his throat.

Hannibal responded by catching his lips in a kiss, one hand rising to tug at his hair, and pulling him close, holding him there lest he pull away again. Will chuckled, kissing down over the side of Hannibal’s jaw as he continued to work open the buttons of his shirt, his fingers tugging lightly at the hair he found on his bare chest, drawing a low moan from Hannibal’s lips.

“That sound like a good plan to you?” Will scraped his teeth over the side of Hannibal’s neck as he spoke, pinching skin to leave a dark red mark in his wake.

“You know it does.” Hannibal replied, more a gasp than a proper sentence spoken.

“Tell me.” Will replied, raking his nails down the bare expanse of Hannibal’s chest towards his stomach.

“I want you to fuck me.” Hannibal groaned, and Will smiled against his skin.

“There we go.” He pushed the shirt off of Hannibal’s shoulders, kissing across the newly exposed skin as he did.

Hannibal sat up just enough to allow him to push the shirt down over his arms before Will pushed him down again, pinning his wrists under one hand, and using the other one to unbutton his own shirt.

“Beautiful.” Hannibal murmured, his eyes trailing over each newly exposed inch of Will’s skin before he shrugged his own shirt off. Will knelt to kiss him again, nipped at his lips, ground their hips together, drawing a low moan from the man underneath him.

The rest of their clothes came away quickly after that, they kissed slowly, hands exploring each other's bodies before Will opened Hannibal with his fingers. Both men moaned in tandem when he pushed in, Hannibal’s fingers digging into Will’s shoulders hard, thighs tight around his hips. They were pressed chest-to-chest as they fucked, arms tight around one another, Will’s face buried in the side of Hannibal’s neck. That possessiveness came into his mind again and he bit at the skin he found, leaving trails of bruises in his wake.

Hannibal came first, Will’s name like a prayer on his lips, and he clung to Will as he too finished, a sharp groan escaping from his lips.

After Will lay with his head on Hannibal's chest, clever fingers slowly threading through his hair as they drifted off to sleep. He thought of Beverly, safe in her escape, of sudden endings, and of the ways in which his life was not his own, rather he felt like a boat on the sea, rudderless and tossed about by waves. He wondered where he'd land when all this came to an end. He wondered how much blood there was left to spill.

He said something then, which had plagued him for some time, a thought which lingered in his mind since he'd heard Hannibal speak in his sleep several weeks previous.

"Who's Mischa?" He asked, and felt Hannibal turn to stone beneath his cheek.

"How do you know that name?" Hannibal said after a long moment, his voice sounded different than Will had ever heard it before.

"You say it your sleep." Will elaborated, and he felt Hannibal relax some, but not fully. "Some corner of your mind too dark for me to tread?" His words served to echo words Hannibal had said to him what felt like an eternity ago. Back before Will had so much blood on his hands.

"It's not something I want to talk about." Hannibal said, a bit sharply.

"You promised me a secret, Hannibal." Will replied. "You always keep your promises."

There was a long pause before Hannibal heaved a sigh. "She was… my sister."

"Was?"

"She died," Hannibal said, and the words felt like a stone in Will's chest. "When I was very young."

"Did you kill her?" Will couldn't not ask, he needed to know, felt this was linked somehow to the making of Hannibal.

"No." Hannibal shifted their position, buried his own face in the cleft of Will's shoulder, Will was surprised to realize he was seeking comfort there. "But I ate her."

"I'm sorry." Will whispered, pressing a kiss to Hannibal's shoulder. Hannibal said nothing. He held Hannibal close then, realizing in that moment this was likely something he had never told another person. An intimate glance into the mind of a man he yearned to understand. They didn't speak for a long time, but Will lay awake for a long time, his head filled with notion that all this, for better or for worse, would soon come to an end.

*****

Jack sat quietly across from Beverly for a long time, his brow furrowed deeply, when he finally spoke, he seemed at a loss.

“You realise the problem with this.” Jack said after a long moment. “We have no evidence to go on, this was a complete breach of conduct.”

“I followed my gut Jack, and I was *right* .” She snapped back.

“I know that, but we can’t make any claim based on breaking an entering. We could have, if you’d brought Will with you.”

“Will stayed because he wants us to catch him, Jack.”

“And I’m glad he did, but it does put us in an unfortunate position.” He sighed then. “We’re going to get him out of there but we have to go into this with a level head, can you do that for me?”

Beverly nodded. “Yeah, I can do that.”

She couldn’t promise she wouldn’t attempt to stab Hannibal Lecter again the next time she saw him, but she would try her best.

Chapter End Notes

on that note, we're rounding the corner towards the end folks, been more than a year now....

crazy how it goes

Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

> uhhhhh….. it's been a wild ride folks, thanks to all of you, those of you that stuck around from the beginning and those of you that picked It up late. You're all perfect and wonderful and I adore you, and holy shit it's really taken me almost two years to write this thing huh?
>
> Anyway, sorry to get gushy or whatever... I just have a lot of feelings.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jack was surprised and more than a little alarmed when two days later he received a dinner invitation from Hannibal Lecter. It was unexpected at best, and at worst, it was ominous.

He told Beverly, of course, it was important she knew, important he went into this with some form of backup. So together they formulated a plan, and Jack kindly accepted the invitation. Perhaps, in this instance, something drastic was the way to go after all.

*****

That evening found Hannibal waiting for Will in the living room. Dinner ready, and a fire blazing and music playing low and ambient. Maggie lay calmly in her basket, her tail thumping halfheartedly against the hardwood every time someone glanced in her direction. It was surprising when Hannibal lead him into the living room after dinner, pulling him into a gentle kiss.

“Dance with me?” Hannibal asked, fondness clear across his features.

“Yeah, okay.” Will couldn’t help but laugh a little at the… *chivalry* of it. Hannibal carried himself like the protagonist of an old Hollywood romance, it sat so counter to everything that had brought them to this point.

It was something in the way Hannibal held him that made Will realize something was wrong. There was a desperation about it, in the way his fingers bit into Will’s hip, in the way their cheeks brushed, holding him as close as was possible without pulling Will into him completely.

It rang clear in his head in that moment, and Will’s heart ran faster in his chest.

He knows.

“What’s all this about?” He asked after a moment, managing to keep his voice even as he did.

“Can’t I just show that I care?” Hannibal asked, and in that moment, he looked vulnerable, lovestruck and tender in a way that made Will *ache* somewhere deep in his chest.

The words spilled from his lips before he had a chance to stop them, as if they’d been sitting ready on the tip of his tongue, to fall at any moment, given the slightest push. “They know. They’re coming for you.”

Something softened in Hannibal’s gaze at the words, and the corners of his mouth twitched just a bit. “I know, darling.”

It was the flood of relief, following the swell of affection that crashed over him, a wave to shore. Inevitable. “Are you angry with me?”

“I was. I’m not anymore, not now that you've been honest with me. You acted as expected, to lack resistance, to surrender without a fight would take away that which I love so deeply about you.”

Will caught Hannibal’s face between his hands, pulled him down into a kiss, a sharp, desperate thing and Hannibal held him close, stroked the back of his neck slowly as Will broke the kiss to bury his head in Hannibal’s shoulder for a long moment.

“Will you leave?” Will asked, when he could find his voice again. “Run before they find you?”

“I will not allow myself to be caged.”

There was another long moment, in which Will realized something about himself he’d never known before. “Will you take me with you?”

Hannibal looked stricken at the question, his eyes met Will’s for a moment, then dropped. It was the first time, Will noted, that Hannibal was the one unable to meet *his* gaze. “Is that what you want?”

“Yes.” Will replied, and it scared him how sure of himself he felt in that moment. He’d never in his life meant something as much as he meant this.

Hannibal’s next kiss threatened to devour him whole.

*****

It was much later in the evening, the two of them curled up between the sheets, Hannibal's head resting Will's chest, right over his heartbeat, when they spoke about it in more detail.

"Where will you take me?" Will asked, and Hannibal chuckled warmly, planting a slow trail of kisses down the side of Will's neck to his shoulder as he spoke.

"Everywhere, my love."

"Where first?"

"Palermo, I think." Another kiss. "I will show you the Norman Chapel there, a marvelous achievement of Italian architecture. And at the center of it all, a single skull, graven in the floor, a striking reminder of our own mortality."

"And then?" Will had never been to Europe. He'd seen enough of the United States, and he'd been south of the border into Mexico on a few occasions, but aside from that, he hadn't seen much of the world. He'd never really had the time, or the desire to. But somehow the thought of travelling at Hannibal's side was not merely bearable, but rather, something he yearned for.

"Florence next." His tone was soft, almost placating, his lips still brushing absently over Will's skin as he spoke. "And then perhaps after we've seen Italy, we'll go to France."

"It almost sounds as if you've put thought into this." Will teased, but there was a question lingering just beneath the words, because he couldn't help but wonder if Hannibal *had* thought about this, about the best possible world for the two of them.

"Mere speculation." Hannibal murmured, but for the second time that evening he couldn't meet Will's eyes.

And for a moment, Will could see it, just behind the back of his eyes. It was a house somewhere in the European countryside, maybe the south of France, if he wanted to lean into the cliche. It was a big yard for Maggie, and maybe a couple more dogs, once Will had worked Hannibal up to that. It was a big kitchen for Hannibal's cooking. It was kisses over coffee in the morning and a cozy king sized bed to fall asleep in each other's arms.

It was a life together.

But it wasn't them. It wasn't what they deserved. People like them didn't get lives like that. Hannibal Lecter was a monster, and the more Will stayed around him, the more Will found himself becoming a monster himself.

It was a pretty thought, but a thought was all it was. There was only one way this ended, and that was bloody.

****

Jack was tense when he arrived at Lecter's door for dinner, a tension no less alleviated when no one came to answer said door. After five minutes, he rang the bell again. Still there was nothing. He was more surprised to find the door unlocked when he tried the handle. He called out a greeting as he entered the front hall.

When he heard no reply, Jack crept into the house, through the living room, following the sound of soft classical music until he found himself in the dining room. It was dimly lit with candles laid strategically around the room. Food had already been laid out, and there were three perfect place settings. Only one of them was occupied. Jack's eyes widened when he saw who was sitting at the table.

"Will?"

Will smiled at him, he looked nervous. "Hi Jack, please sit."

"Will, what the hell is going on?"

Will's jaw twitched, but he offered no response.

"Come on, let's get you out of here."

Will just shook his head. "That's not the game Jack. You have to play along. It's rude otherwise."

"Will, please." Jack stepped closer to the table, if he'd been paying more attention, he might have noticed the way Will's lips twitched in the beginnings of a smile, but he didn't. "Just tell me where he is." Something felt very wrong about this whole thing. Jack's heart was pounding in his chest.

Will did smile then, a sharp, twisted thing. "He's right behind you, Jack."

Before Jack could turn, he felt a needle pierce the side of his neck, cold filled his blood and the world went black around him.

******

It was hard, for someone in Will's position, not to be a bit anxious about all of this. It didn't help, the way Jack looked at him when he came to, betrayal and confusion seeming to battle one another behind his eyes before settling on concern. Will felt Hannibal's hand tighten on his shoulder.

"We invited you here to make an announcement, Jack, but your rudeness has made this affair rather difficult." Will could hear the smile in Hannibal's voice even if he couldn't see it.

"What the hell are you talking about?" Jack's words came out slightly slurred, still thick from the drugs in his system. His wrists strained against the restraints which held him to the chair.

A futile effort.

“Will has made a choice, Jack.” Hannibal’s tone was almost sweet. “To be something more than your loyal dog. To instead become all he was meant to be.”

Will hadn’t spoken yet, and here Jack looked up at him, addressing him directly. “Will, this is insane. This isn’t you.”

“No, Jack.” Will shook his head, he sounded a little dazed but that was the point of all of this. He needed to seem out of it, needed to sell his point to Jack in case something went wrong. “This is me. Hannibal helped me find what I was missing.”

Hannibal’s hand slid up from Will’s shoulder to rest in his hair at the words. He held out a hand to him then, hauling him gently to his feet. “This evening has already fallen into disorder, and I doubt we have as much time as was originally planned. Come to me.”

Will slipped easily into Hannibal’s hold, allowed himself to be kissed for a brief moment before he pulled away again.

Bloody, he reminded himself, was the only way this could end. Hannibal’s fingers lingered on Will’s for a long moment as he slipped the blade into Will’s hand. “Will you do the honours, my darling?” He murmured, his eyes were soft, smitten, and Will felt an ache in his chest.

Will just smiled as he took the blade in his hand. He was afraid what words would come if he opened his mouth.

Instead he tightened his grip on the blade and approached Jack where he was still somewhat slumped in the chair. Hannibal was right there, at his back, and Will could feel his eyes boring into the back of his neck.

Jack’s eyes met his, and he looked scared. “You don’t have to do this, Will.”

Will shook his head. “I do, Jack, don’t you see.”

Jack finally nodded, he understood, or at least he thought he did. “Do what you need to, Will, I forgive you.”

Will paused for a second, held the blade up to Jack’s throat. He closed his eyes, for a long moment. “I’m sorry,” he whispered and then he spun abruptly.

Hannibal must have known what he’d been planning, because he stepped back in time to avoid the brunt of the motion, with the blade merely catching his side. It was only a second before Will felt Hannibal’s own blade in his gut. He out, stumbled from the pain, the wind knocked from his chest, something worsened as Hannibal dragged the knife abruptly upwards, tearing through muscle and skin like tissue.

But even as he collapsed, Hannibal was there to catch him, held him close for a moment, scarcely able to breathe for the pain. “I wanted so badly to trust you.” The words were a broken whisper against the side of his neck, and it took Will a moment to realize the wetness in the side of his neck was tears. Hannibal was crying.

He expected to be dropped, left in a bloody heap on the hardwood, but instead found himself lowered down, placed almost reverently on the floor. It was hard for his eyes to focus now through the pain, but he saw Hannibal's face above his, felt a hand gently rest on his cheek. "This is not the end for us, Will. I can promise you that." The last thing Will felt before the world fell away around him was the gentle press of a kiss to his forehead.

****

The first thing Will was aware of was the steady beeping of a monitor, the second was someone squeezing his hand. His eyes opened for just a moment, just long enough to take in the face of Beverly Katz frowning down at him before they drifted shut again.

His sleep was plagued by dreams, feverish visions. Alone in the cabin with his beast, torn open, mounted on the wall. Skin slowly stripped from his bones by black talons. Drowning in darkness, and screaming soundlessly as he was stripped down to blood and bone, rebuilt as something else.

The next time he woke he was alone. He wasn't sure how long it had been. He tried to sit up, but there was an ache in his abdomen and he let out a sharp cry of pain. It was then he heard a gasp from the doorway, and looked up to see the frowning face of Alana Bloom. She was holding a coffee in a Styrofoam cup, and her hand shook minutely where she gripped it.

"Oh my god, you're awake."

Will laughed. "Hopefully."

"I'll go get a nurse." She was running from the room before he could say anything else.

After the nurse had given Will his medication and checked over his chart, he and Alana sat alone in a room together. She watched him for a long time, Will couldn't stand the pity in her eyes.

"Jack… Is he?"

"He's okay." She squeezed his hand a little tighter.

Will nodded, squeezing his eyes shut for a long moment. "That's good. I don't know what I'd do if…"

"Don't think about it." Alana shook her head. "You're not to blame for this, Will."

"I know that." Will sighed. "Some part of me knows anyway, it just get's a little mixed up with all the rest of it." He was silent for a long moment. "Where is he?"

"Jack? He's home with his wife. Though I imagine if they've called him, he could be on his way here by now."

“No... Not Jack.”

“Hannibal.” Will’s eyes darted to her face when she said his name. He nodded, just a slight jut of his chin.

Alana was silent for a long moment, pressing her lips together, Will felt something like dread in the pit of his stomach.

“Where is he, Alana.” His words came a bit to sharp, Alana flinched a bit at the sound of them.

“Will, we…” She swallowed. “He got away.”

“What?” He was caught somewhere between dread and relief, and found his tone turning to anger. “What happened?”

“There weren’t enough people there.” She shook her head. “Just Jack and Beverly, she stopped to save your life.”

“And look what good that did.” He muttered the words more to himself, but Alana still winced. “I’m tired.” He said then, directing the words at her. “I need to rest a bit before Jack comes storming in.”

Her laugh seemed forced. “Do you want me to stay?”

Will shook his head. “I need time alone.” He said slowly. “I assume there’s armed guards posted outside my door?”

She nodded again.

“Then I’ll be fine.” He traced his eyes across her face, he could see the lines of exhaustion etched beneath her makeup. “You look tired. Go home, rest. Worry about me later.”

She seemed reluctant, but finally agreed.

After she left, Will squeezed his eyes shut for a long moment. He didn't want to think anymore.

******

The first thing Will asked Jack when he arrived came as something of a surprise. “Is Maggie okay?”

Jack’s brow furrowed at that. “Who?”

“The dog.”

“Don’t worry about the dog.” He said, because he wasn’t sure how else to respond.

“She’s *my* dog, Jack.”

Jack just sighed. “She’s with Beverly.”

Will nodded at that. “Good.”

“Are *you* okay?” Jack pressed, but Will just shrugged.

“When have I ever been?” And with that he turned his gaze on the window and didn’t speak again.

*****

Two weeks later a man walked into a police station. He was tall, and well-dressed, and he carried himself immaculately, despite his slight limp.

He approached the counter, where a young, disinterested looking secretary focused intently on the game he was playing on his phone. The man folded his hands on the wooden surface, and cleared his throat.

The man at the desk didn’t look up from his phone even as he spoke. “Hi, can I help you?”

“Actually, I rather think it’s the other way around.” A sly smile. “I’m here to turn myself in.”

The man looked up, startled. His eyes widened as he recognized the face of the man standing before him.

This is how the Chesapeake Ripper is caught.

Seven Months Later

Will is packing the last of his boxes the day Hannibal Lecter is officially interned at the Baltimore State Hospital for the criminally insane. He has taken a short reprieve to sit on the porch, slowly nursing a glass of whiskey, watching as the dogs played in the grass under the orange glow of the setting sun. Maggie is with them, fully grown now, an enormous, clumsy thing with a wrinkled face, she lays panting at Winston’s feet, her tongue lolling lazily out of her mouth.

He hears the telltale sound of tires on the gravel drive and the dogs begin to bark, running excitedly towards the vehicle pulling into his driveway.

Alana Bloom steps out of the car, she scratches a few ears as she approaches, her smile is tight and guarded.

She comes up onto his porch, her hands shoved down into the pockets of her jacket, looking uncertain as to her purpose here.

“Come to see me off?” He raised an eyebrow.

“I guess just to see how you are.” She fidgets in her pockets before sitting down in the chair beside his. “How are you, Will?”

“Honestly?” He takes a long sip of his drink, empties it, and sets it down on the arm of the chair. “I’m good.”

Her brow furrows, she doesn’t believe him. “Have you thought about… talking to someone.”

“I think I’m done with shrinks for a while.” His laugh is sharp, bitter, makes his ears ring. “No offence.”

“What you went through, Will, that’s not something that’s easy to come back from. There’s no shame in asking for help.”

“I’ll be fine, Alana.” It’s a bit sharper than he meant it to be.

She sighs, but doesn’t press. “So you're still planning on leaving then?”

“I can’t be here anymore.” As he speaks, Maggie comes up on the porch, she snuffles at his hand and he scratches absently at her ears. “Anyway, I figure a change of scenery is good. Go somewhere people don’t know me.”

She nods, and a moment later throws her arms around him, he hugs her back, buries his face in her hair, feels her shake just a little in his arms. “Don’t be a stranger, okay?” She says, when she’s pulled back.

“Okay.” After she’s gone, Will pours himself another drink, and keeps packing. It’s cold today, rainy, and the scar in his abdomen aches with it. He has too many scars these days.

He needs to go somewhere warm, he thinks. Somewhere no one knows his name.

He rubs absently at the scar on his neck and sighs.

Maybe somewhere coastal.

He needs to walk into the ocean and wash the blood from his skin.

Chapter End Notes

… and that's all he wrote

(jk I have a sequel planned don't yall worry your pretty little heads)

anyway, you made it this far... check out my tumblr if you want

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!